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THE OUTBREAK
OF THE
GREAT FRENCH REVOLUTION

RELATED BY
A PEASANT OF LORRAINE.

By MM. ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN.

TRANSLATED BY
MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

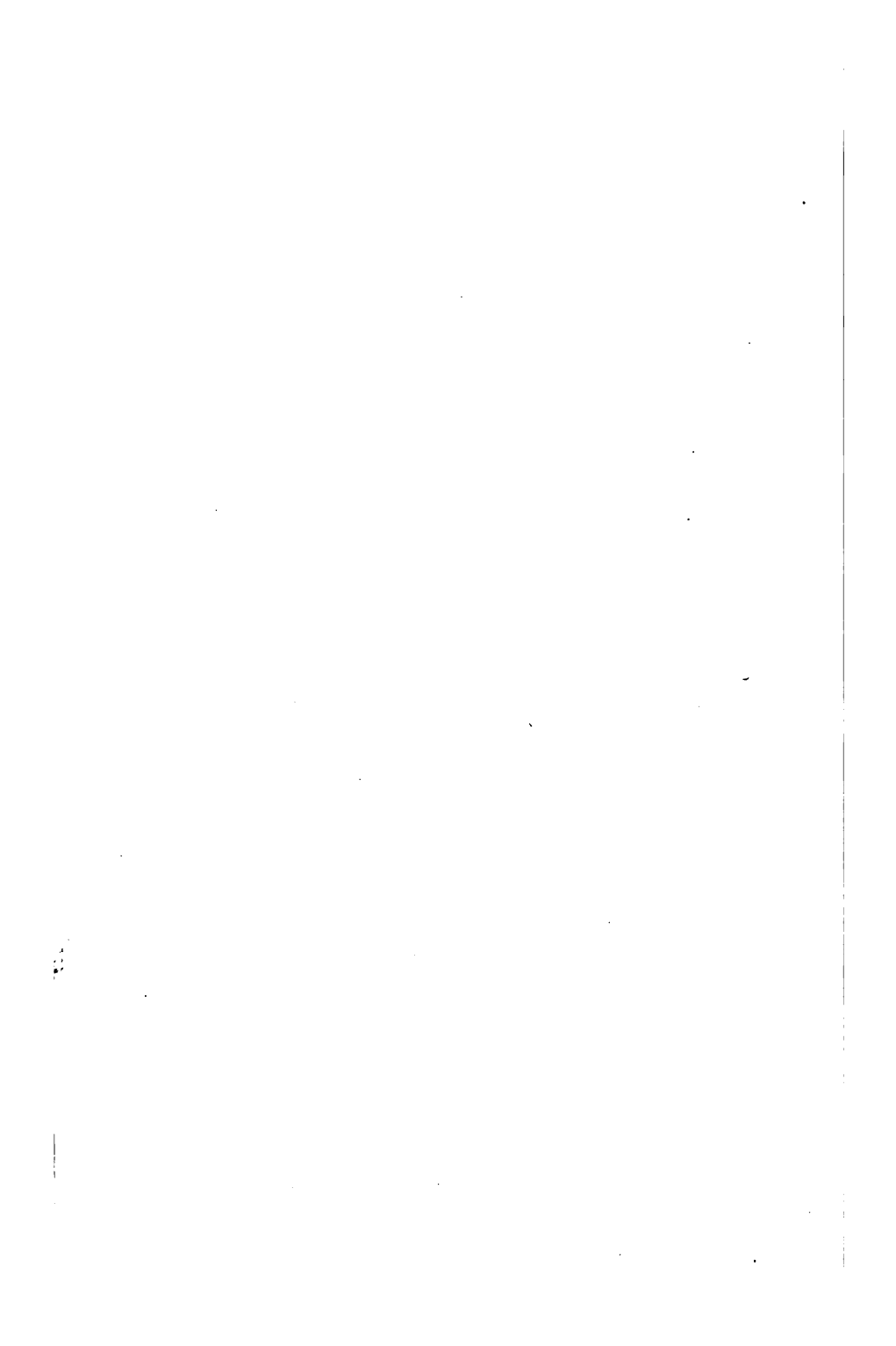
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THE
OUTBREAK
OF THE
GREAT FRENCH REVOLUTION.

THE STATES GENERAL.

CHAPTER I.

17 THE history of the great rising of the people and the middle classes against the nobles, in 1789, has often been told, by men of learning, and of talent, who take a lofty view of events. As for me, I am an old peasant, and I mean to speak only of our own affairs. The best thing one can do is to mind one's own business thoroughly, and to profit by what one has seen and known.

You must know, then, that before the Revolution, five villages were attached to the lordship of Phalsbourg, namely, Vilschberg, Mittelbronn, Lutzelbourg, Hultenhausen, and

Hâzelbourg, and that all the people belonging to the town, and those of Vilschberg and Hâzelbourg were free, but those who belonged to the other villages, both men and women, were serfs, and could not leave the lordship, or otherwise absent themselves, without permission from the provost. The provost administered justice at the town hall, his jurisdiction extended over persons and things, he wore a sword, and had power to pass sentence of death. Where the guard-room now stands, was the vaulted yard of the court-house in those days, where prisoners who would not confess their crimes were put to the torture. The provost's sergeant and the executioner so handled them, that their shrieks were heard as far as the market-place. And then, on market-day, a gallows would be set up, under the old elms, and the executioner would hang them, with his feet on their shoulders. A man must have been very hardened, even to think of doing wrong in those days!

Phalsbourg had what was called *haut passage*, which means that each waggon-load of merchandise, such as cloth, wool, or other things of the same sort, paid a florin at the

barrier; each waggon-load of scaffolding planks, staves, and other timber wood paid six *gros de Lorraine*; each load of fine stuff, such as velvet, silk, fine cloth, thirty *gros*; a laden horse, two *gros*; a bale of merchandise, half a *gros*; a hogshead of salt, six *gros*; a bushel of rye or corn, three *gros*; a bushel of barley or hay, two; a cwt. of iron, two; a cow or bullock, six *pfenings*; a calf or pig, two *pfenings*; &c. So that the people of Phalsbourg or the environs could neither eat, drink, or clothe themselves without paying a round sum to the dukes of Lorraine.

Then came the *gabelle*, that is to say that all the hotel, inn, and tavern keepers residing at Phalsbourg, or in the dependent villages, were obliged to pay to his Highness six pots of beer or wine for each cask stored or sold; and his Highness's share of all sales and allotments; for instance five florins per cent. on the sale of houses or lands. After these taxes came the measurement tax, by which every kind of grain sold in the market paid one *sou* by the regal to his Highness. Next came the fair dues. There were three fairs in the year; the first on St. Mathias' day, the second on St. Modesty's, and the third on St. Gall's.

Two sergeants came round and taxed the stalls at so much per place, for the benefit of his Highness. Then there were the civic taxes. A *sou* per cent. on wool, flour, and other merchandise ; the fines, which were appealed against before the provost, but judged and taxed to his Highness's advantage by his council, the rights of gleaning, of cutting fuel, and of threshing, the great tithe, of which one-third went to the church, and the other two to his Highness ; and the little tithe in corn, for the church only, but which his Highness ultimately appropriated, because he loved himself even better than the church.

And now, if you want to know how so many good people came to be in the clutches of his Highness, and of his provosts, bailiffs, seneschals, and councillors, you must bear in mind that about two hundred years before this miserable time, George John, Count Palatine, Duke of Bavaria, and Count of Weldentz, who possessed immense forests in our country, by the grace of the Emperor of Germany, but who never could get anything out of them, because there were no people to live in them, no road, and no navigable rivers

for the transport of the timber ;—made it known in Alsace, in Lorraine, and in the Palatinate, that all those who had industry and perseverance, had only to come to his forest lands, where they should be given free holdings, and live like fighting cocks ; and that he, John de Weldentz, was doing this for the glory of God. That Phalsbourg being a high road between France, Lorraine, Vestrich, and Alsace, artisans and dealers, coopers, smiths, cartwrights, shoemakers, armourers, locksmiths, tavernkeepers, and other industrious persons would find a great market there for their merchandise ; and that as every enterprise ought to be undertaken for the honour of God, all those who should resort to the city of Phalsbourg should be exempt from servitude, that they should be permitted to build, and furnished with wood, gratis. Also, that a church should be erected for them, where simplicity, purity, and honesty should be preached, and a school set up, in which their children should be instructed in the true religion, seeing that the mind of youth is an excellent garden wherein to plant delicious flowers, whose perfume shall rise even to the Almighty Himself.

He promised many other advantages, and the news spread all through Germany, so that a great number of people hastened to secure these benefits. They cleared the land, cultivated it, and built on it, and turned the worthless forests into a valuable property for George John. After which, the said George John, Count de Weldentz, sold the lands, with all the men and beasts upon them to Charles III., Duke of Lorraine, for the sum of four hundred thousand florins, as a homage to good faith and human justice, and to the glory of God.

The greater number of these people were Lutherans, George John having announced that a pure and simple faith, according to Saint Paul, should be preached at Phalsbourg in virtue of the confession of Augsbourg. But, when he had pocketed the four hundred thousand florins, his promises troubled him no more, and the successor of Duke Charles III., who had made none, sent his trusty and well-beloved counsellor of state, Didier Dallet, to exhort his good people of Phalsbourg to embrace the Catholic Faith, and, if unhappily some among them should persist in error, to order them to leave his territories, on pain

of expulsion, and the confiscation of their goods.

Some allowed themselves to be converted, and the others, men, women, and children, departed from their homes, carrying with them some old furniture. All being thus settled to his liking, the duke employed "the well-beloved inhabitants of Phalsbourg to repair the ramparts, to build the two gates of France and Germany of cut stones, to dig the trenches, to erect a town hall in order to instal the court of justice therein, to build a church, that the faithful might be catechised, and a house adjoining it for the *curé*, that he might watch over his flock, and, lastly, a public market, in order that taxes might be imposed and collected there. After which, the officers of his Highness established such rights, charges, dues, and *corvées* as they pleased, and the poor people slaved on, from father to son, from 1583 to 1789, for the benefit of the dukes of Lorraine and the kings of France, and all because they had believed the promises of George John of who was nothing but a swindler, and other people whom one meets in

The Dukes established at Phalsbourg, by letters patent, several corporations which were associations among men of the same trade, with a view to preventing all others from working in their line, so that they might thus secure the power of plundering the public, among themselves, without let or hindrance. The term of apprenticeship was three, four, and even five years, and the fees for admission to the craft were very heavy. Then, after having produced his *chef d'œuvre*, and received his patent, the workman proceeded to treat his neighbours as he had been treated. You must not picture the town to yourself as you see it now. No doubt the outlines, and the cut stone buildings have not changed ; but not a house was painted, they were all whitewashed, with small neat *cintrées* windows and doors ; and underneath the little arches, behind the leaden window frame, sat the tailor cross-legged on his table, cutting or sewing cloth, and the weaver, at his loom, throwing his shuttle in the shade. The soldiers of the garrison, with their large three-cornered hats and their shabby white coats, the tails reaching to their heels, were the most wretched of all, they had but one poor meal a

day. The tavern waiters and the low eating-house keepers begged for scraps from the houses for these poor creatures. This was their condition a few years before the Revolution. The people were wan and sickly. The grandmother's gown was the inheritance of the granddaughter, and the grandfather's shoes of the grandson.

In the streets no pavement, no lamp by night, on the roofs no slates, and the little blinking window holes covered for twenty years with the same piece of paper! In the midst of all this misery, the provost, with his grand black toque, the young officers, all nobles, with their little three-cornered hats, and their swords across their backs, the Capuchin monks with their long dirty beards, their red noses, their serge gowns, and their shirtless backs, going and coming in troops to and from their monastery, where the college now stands. All this is as present to my mind, as if it had existed until yesterday, and the remembrance of it makes me say to myself: "What good fortune for us unfortunate creatures that the Revolution came, and especially for us peasants!"

For, if the misery of the people was great

in the towns, you cannot possibly imagine what it was in the country. The peasants had to bear the same burthens as the townspeople, and a number of others in addition. In every village in Lorraine there was a farm which belonged either to the lord of the soil or to a monastery ; all the good lands were included in this farm, only the worst remained for the poor people. The unfortunate peasants were not permitted to plant what they pleased in the land ; meadow must remain meadow, tilled land must remain tilled land. If the peasant changed his field into a meadow he deprived the curé of his tithes, if he changed his meadow into a field he diminished the rights of pasturage, if he sowed clover in the fallow ground, he could not forbid the flock of the lord of the soil, or of the monastery, to feed there. His land was taken up by fruit trees, which were let every year to the profit of either, he must not destroy those trees, but, on the contrary, was bound to replace them within the year, when they died off. The shade cast by these trees, the damage done in gathering the fruit, the impediments to tillage caused by their roots, were the sources of great loss to him. The lords of the

soil had a right, in hunting, to ride over the tilled ground, to lay waste the crops at all seasons ; but the peasant, who killed a single head of game, in his own field, risked the galleys.

The lord of the soil, and the abbey, had also the right of separate pasturage, which meant that their cattle were taken to the pastures an hour earlier than the village herds. The cattle belonging to the peasants had therefore no chance of thriving, they had only such pasture as the others left. The farm belonging to the lord of the soil, or to the abbey, had also right of dovecot. Its pigeons covered the fields ; and, in order to secure a harvest, a double quantity of grain had to be sown.

Again, every householder had to pay to the lord of the soil, in the course of the year, fifteen bundles of hay, ten chickens, twenty-four eggs. He had to do three days' work on account of himself, three for each son, or servant, and three for each horse or cart. He had to mow the meadow around the château, to make his hay, and cart it to the grange at the first stroke of the bell, on pain of a fine of five gros for every defalcation. He was bound to find conveyance for all stone and

wood used in repairing the farm or château. The lord of the soil allowed him a crust of bread and a clove of garlic for each day's work. This is what was called the *corvée*.

If I were to tell you of the common oven, the common mill, the common winepress, at which all the village were obliged to bake their bread, to grind their corn, and to press their grapes, *moyennant donc redevance*; if I told you about the executioner who had a right to the skin of every dead beast; and lastly, of the tithe, which as you may imagine was the worst of all, since the eleventh *gube*, had to be given to the curés, where the poor wretches were already feeding such a host of religious, monks, Carmelites, Capuchins, and mendicant friars of all the orders;—if I dwelt on these charges, and a thousand others, which crushed the population of the country places down to the earth, I should never have finished.

One would have thought that the nobles and the monasteries had undertaken to exterminate the unfortunate peasants; and were seeking by every means to accomplish the task. But the measure was not full, even yet! So long as our country remained subject to the states of Lorraine, the rights of his Highness,

those of the nobles, the abbeys, the priories, the monasteries, and the convents, were quite sufficient to crush us ; but, after the death of Stanislas and the union of Lorraine with France, there were added to all these, *la taille du roi*,—that is to say, each father of a family had to pay six sous a head for each child, and the same for each servant ;—the subvention of the King, which meant the twentieth of the net produce of the land, but only of the peasants' land—the nobles and the clergy were exempt from this tax—and also a heavy tax on salt and tobacco, from which the nobles and the clergy were exempt, and the King's *gabelle*, or collective duties.

If the princes, the nobles, the monks, and the nuns, who had possession for centuries of the best land, while they forced the wretched peasants to labour, to sow, and to reap for them, and to pay them every conceivable kind of due, fine, and tax—if they had employed their riches in making roads, in digging canals, in draining marshes, in improving and manuring the soil, in building schools and hospitals ;—the evil would have been much less ; but they did none of these things, they thought only of their pleasures, their pride, their

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avarice. We saw a Cardinal, Louis de Rohan, a "prince of the Church," as they called him, living at Saverne in open debauchery, mocking at honesty and honest people, ordering his lackeys to beat the peasants who came in the way of his carriage. We saw the nobles at Neuwillers, at Bouxville, at Hildeshausen, building orangeries and pheasant houses, and conservatories, laying out flower gardens half a league long, full of marble vases and fountains, to imitate the king's palace at Versailles, —and parading profligate women in silk dresses among the poverty-stricken people. We saw a perpetual concourse of bare-footed friars, cordeliers, and capuchins, begging and devouring all they could get from January to December. We saw the bailiffs, the provosts, the seneschals, the registrars, the officials of justice of every kind thinking only of gain, and living upon the fines and exactions imposed upon us. We saw many things besides, and they were sad sights. All the more sad that the whole system was sustained by men who were the sons of peasants, against the interest of themselves, their parents, and their friends.

Once settled in a regiment, these sons of

peasants forgot the wretchedness of their native villages, forgot their mothers and sisters, recognised no one but their officers, their colonels, the nobles who had bought them ; and for whom they would have massacred their brethren, proclaiming that it was for the honour of the flag. And yet, not one of them could become an officer,—the *villeins* were not worthy of an epaulet, but after being maimed in a battle they had leave to go and beg. The sharp ones among them haunted the wretched taverns, and endeavoured to entrap the conscripts, and cheat them of their small bounty-money. The boldest took to highway robbery. I saw a dozen men hanged at Phalsbourg, who were almost all old soldiers, discharged after the Seven Years' War. They had lost the habit of work, they did not receive a farthing by way of pension, and they were all taken at Vilschberg, on their return from stopping a coach on the road to Saverne. I have now made you understand something of the old state of things. The nobles and the clergy had everything, the people had nothing.

CHAPTER II.

THESE things are all changed, God be praised ! The peasants have taken their fair share of the good things of the earth, and I have not been the last to do so. Every one in the country knows the farm of old Michel, his meadows in the Valtin, his fine coffee-coloured Swiss cows, and his twelve large draught bullocks. I have no reason to complain. My grandson, Jacques, is at the Polytechnic School in Paris, and in the first class ; my granddaughter, Christine, is married to Martins, the inspector of forests, a man of sound good sense ; my second granddaughter, Juliette, is married to Forbin, the commandant of engineers ; and the youngest, Michel, whom I love the best, is going to be a doctor. He took his degree at Nancy last year, and if he will only work he is sure to prosper.

And the whole of this I owe to the Revolution ! Before '89, I could not have possessed anything ; I should have had to work all my life for the profit of the lord of the soil, and the monks. When I am sitting in my old arm-chair, in our living-room, where our old delft shines brightly, displayed on the shelves over the door, in the light of the great fire ; when the grandmother and the young ones are coming and going about me, and my old dog, stretched out in front of the hearth, blinks at me by the hour together, with his grey old muzzle between his paws ; when I look out of window and see my white apple trees, my old beehives ; when I hear the boys and girls singing and romping in the farmyard, or the ploughs going out, the hay carts coming in, the whips cracking, the horses neighing ; when I sit there, thinking, the old hut in which my poor father and mother, sisters and brothers lived, before 1789, rises up before my mind's eye once more. I see the four bare and crumbling walls, the casements stuffed with straw, the thatch rotted by the wind, the rain, and the melted snow ; I see the black worm-eaten lair, where we were smothered in smoke, or shivering with cold and hunger ; and then I think of my good father

and my industrious mother toiling without respite that we might have a few beans to eat; I see their cowering bodies covered with rags, their worn and sickly faces full of hopeless misery; and then I shudder, and if I am alone, I bow my head and weep. My anger against those who made us endure such an existence, that they might extract the last farthing from us, will never die out. My eighty-five years have not softened it; on the contrary, the older I grow, the more I feel it. And then, to think that the mean wretches—the Gros-Jean, the Gros-Jacques, the Guillots, who are sons of the people—should write in their newspapers that the Revolution ruined us all, that we were much better and happier before '89! Scoundrels! whenever one of those newspapers comes in my way, it makes me tremble with rage. There is no use in Michel's saying to me:

“But, grandfather, why do you trouble yourself about it? These men are paid to deceive the people. It is their business, their livelihood, poor devils!”

I always say:

“No, from '92 to '99, we shot men who were a thousand times better than these; the nobles, and Condé's soldiers,—they were defending

their own cause, that was fair ! But, to fill one's stomach by betraying father and mother, children and country ! No, that is too much."

If I were to read those villainous newspapers often, I am sure I should have a fit at last. But when, by any accident one gets into the house, my wife takes it away from me. But they are like the plague, one need not ask for them, they find their way in everywhere. I have therefore resolved to write this history—a peasant's story—in order to root out this venom, and teach people what we have suffered. I have been thinking of it for a long time. My wife has preserved all our old letters. It will be a troublesome task, but one has no right to spare one's self trouble when one wishes to do good ; and then, it is a real pleasure to vex those who vex us, and if it were for that purpose only, I would sit before my desk with my spectacles on my nose, for years together, contentedly. It will amuse me too. It will do me good to remember how we hunted down all those wretches. I shall have no occasion to hurry myself ; sometimes one thing will occur to me, sometimes another, and I will write them all down in their proper place, for without order nothing can be well done.

So now, I begin.

No one need try to make me believe that the peasants were well off before the Revolution. I have seen the good old time, as they call it; I have seen our former villages; I have seen the *villeins*, thin starved creatures, shirtless and shoeless, clothed, summer and winter alike, in trousers and blouse of coarse linen; and their wives, so dirty, ragged, and weather-beaten, that they looked more like some strange sort of animals than women; and their children crawling in the mud before our doors, naked, but for a bit of linen round their loins. Why, the nobles themselves could not help writing in one of their books, that "the poor animals, bent over the ground, under the rain and under the sun, earning the bread of all the rest of the world, surely deserved to eat a little of it themselves." They wrote that in a moment of enlightenment, and then they thought no more about it.

Such things as these can never be forgotten; and what I have told you of our village, existed in Mittelbronn, Hultenhausen, in short, all over the country. And the old people of that time told us of a state of things which was even worse. They remembered the great

war between the Swedes, the French, and the Lorrainers, when the peasants were hung in bunches upon the trees ; they spoke of the great pestilence which broke out afterwards, to complete the ruin of the country, so that one might travel for leagues without seeing a living soul,—they cried, lifting up their hands —“ Lord God, deliver us from pestilence, war, and famine !” As for famine, we had it every year. How were we to collect a sufficient supply of beans, lentils, and peas, for the winter, with several lordships, sixteen chapters, twenty-eight abbeys, thirty-six priories, forty-seven monasteries, nineteen nunneries, in one single diocese, all to be provided for before our turn came ? Potatoes were as yet unknown among us, and the poor had no other resource than dried vegetables. How could we get together sufficient provisions ? Certainly no day-labourer could hope to do so. After the *corvées* for ploughing, sowing, harrowing, binding, and driving home,—and in the wine countries, for the vintage harvest ; —in short, after all the fine weather had been employed in the service of the lord of the soil, or for the abbey, what could one do for one’s self, or one’s children ? Nothing. So that,

when the winter came, three-fourths of the inhabitants of the villages turned out on the highroad to beg.

Then the Capuchins at Phalsbourg protested. They declared that if every one took to their business they would quit the country, which would be a great loss to religion. Then, M. Schneider the provost, and the Marquis de Talarn, Governor of the city, forbade begging, and the civic Serjeants, and even the soldiers of the regiments in garrison in their turn gave the Capuchins active support. Nevertheless, men and women cannot starve, and they continued to go out in bands, though at the risk of the galleys, to seek for food.

Want brings men down very low ! But here was not only want but evil example as well. When on every road the poor creatures met Capuchins, Cordeliers, bare-footed Carmelites, fellows six feet high, strong as oxen, and able to fill a wheelbarrow with one dig of a spade ;—striding along with their long beards, and their strong brawny arms, stretching out their hand, and making grimaces for a *sou*, without any shame ; how were *they* to have any restraining self-respect !

But, unhappily, when one is hungry, it is not enough to beg, in order get bread. There

must be others who have it, and are willing to give it, and in those days a certain proverb which says, "Each man for himself, and God for us all," was in fashion. Almost always, towards the end of the winter, a report arose that a band was attacking the coaches, either in Alsace or Lorraine. The troops were put in motion, and the affair terminated by a hanging on a grand scale.

Just imagine a poor basket-maker, in those days, with a wife and six children, without a farthing, without an inch of ground, without a goat, without a hen, in short without any other resource but his labour, whereby to live. And no hope of obtaining a better fate for himself or for his children, because this was the appointed order of things; because some came into the world nobly born, and therefore must have everything, and others were born *villeins*, and must remain poor and miserable to the end of time. Try to realise this condition, long days of hunger, long winter nights, without fire or covering, an existence of constant fear! Dread of the collectors, of the serjeants, of the game-keeper, of the tax-gatherer! Well, notwithstanding all that, when, after a long winter, the sun returned in the spring-time, when it came into the poor hovel, when it

shone upon the great spiders' webs which stretched between the beams of the roof ; on the little hearth in the left corner, on the foot of the ladder, leading up to the loft on the right, on the worn earthen floor of our hut ;—when the warmth, the blessed warmth revived us, the cricket began to chirp, and the woods were turning green ;—then, in spite of all, we rejoiced in our life. We were happy, when we sat on the doorsill, our little bare feet in our hands, or rolled about in the dust, laughing and singing, and looking up at the blue sky.

When, in the evening, our father came home from the wood, with his load of green brooms or birch twigs on his shoulders, the handle of his axe sticking out behind, and his hair hanging over his face ; when he began to smile at us, a long way off, we all raced to meet him. Then he put down his bundle for a moment, while he kissed the little ones, and his face, with the blue eyes, a nose slightly bent at the point, and thick lips, lighted up, and he seemed quite happy. How good he was ! How much he loved us ! And our mother, poor woman, who was grey and wrinkled at forty, but always persevering and brave. Always working in other people's fields, always spinning other people's flax, that she might feed her

brood, and pay the taxes, the duties, the dues of all kinds. What courage she had, in that wretched life of incessant toil without any other hope than the rewards of the life to come ! Nor was this all ; the poor had another grievance also, the worst of all the many sufferings of the peasant. They were in debt. I remember well, when I was quite a little child, I have heard my father say, on his return after having sold some baskets or a few dozens of brooms in the town—

“Here is the salt, and here are the beans and the rice, but I have not a farthing left. I hoped there would have been a few sous for M. Robin.”

This Robin was the richest rascal in Mittelbronn, a big man with a large grizzly beard, an otter skin cap tied under his chin, a fat nose, a yellow skin, round eyes, and a sort of sack on his back, by way of a hood. He always went afoot, wearing linen gaiters up to his knees, with a large basket on his arm, and a wolf dog at his heels. He went about the country collecting the interest due to him, for he lent money in small sums, to every one. He would go to the houses of his unfortunate debtors, and if the money were not ready, he would pocket anything he could get in the meantime, half-a-

dozen eggs, a pound of butter, a piece of cheese, a bottle of *Kirsch*, in short whatever there was to be had. Then he would give the poor wretches a little more time, they would rather allow themselves to be fleeced than to be prosecuted.

In our hovel, Robin found nothing to take, but he would knock at the window and call out :

“ Jean Pierre ? ”

Then, our father would go out trembling, cap in hand, and say :

“ M. Robin ? ”

“ Ah, you're there, are you ? I have to supply two *corvées* on the Bérange, on the Lixheim road ; so you'll come ? ”

“ Yes, Monsieur Robin, yes. ”

“ Without fail ? ”

“ Yes, Monsieur Robin. ”

Then he would go away, and my father would come in quite pale, sit down at a corner of the hearth, and begin to plait his baskets, without a word, his head bent, and his lips close shut. The next day he would go early to fulfil M. Robin's *corvée*, and my mother would cry :

“ Ah, that wretch of a goat ! That wretch of a goat ! We have already paid ten times over for her, and she is nearly useless ! She will be

the ruin of us all! Ah! what could have possessed us to buy her! Alas! Alas!"

And the poor woman would wring her hands and cry, long after my father, his pickaxe on his shoulder, was far upon his way. That night he would bring nothing home, but the interest had been paid for two or three months. Then, when we were quiet again, one fine morning Robin would come tapping at the window! People talk of diseases which eat one's heart out, and dry up one's blood, but the fatal malady of the poor is this borrowing at usurious interest. Their murderers are the usurers, the men who with an appearance of coming to their assistance, live upon them so long as they are above ground. No words could tell you what my parents suffered at the hands of this Robin. They had not a moment's rest, they could not sleep, they grew old with trouble, and the only consolation they had was in the thought that if one of their sons should draw a good number in the militia, they might sell him, and pay off the debt. We were six, four boys and two girls, Nicholas, Lisbeth, myself, Claude, Mathurine, and little Stephen, a deformed, pale, delicate little fellow whom the people about Baraques called 'the little

duck,' because he waddled about on his poor lame legs. All the others were strong and healthy.

Our mother would look at us sometimes, and say :

“Don't fret so much, Jean Pierre ; out of the three one must surely win at the drawing. Then, let Robin look out. As soon as he is paid, I will split his skull with a hatchet.”

Only great misery could give rise to such ideas. Our father made no answer, and as for us, it seemed a matter of course to us that we should be sold ; we believed ourselves to belong to our father and mother, like a herd of cattle. Great poverty makes it impossible for one to see things as they really are ; and before the Revolution, all parents, except the nobles and the middle class, looked upon their children as their property. This is what people call so beautiful ! This is what makes them say there was more respect for fathers and mothers in those days.

Fortunately, our father had too kind a heart to desire to make any profit out of us ; and I have often seen the poor man weep, when, in the midst of the great dearth in the winter, he was obliged to send us out to beg, like the

others. He never could be induced to send little Stephen out in the snow. As for me, I had not to beg for any length of time ; I had not gone out on the road to Mittelbronn or Quatre Vents more than three or four times before I was eight years old, and at that age, my godfather, Jean Leroux, the blacksmith, who kept an inn at the other end of the village, took me into his service as cattle-herd, and afterwards I only went back to our hovel at night, to sleep.

A great many years have gone by since then, but the inn of "The Three Pigeons," on the side of the hill, is plainly before my eyes now. I see Phalsbourg at the end of the road, a grey mass against the sky ; before the inn is the dark little smithy, behind is the orchard, sloping downwards, with a great oak tree and a spring of bright water in the middle. The water foamed over large stones arranged there, and spread itself out on the grass, while the oak covered it with its shade. In 1778, the soldiers of the Bocart regiment had made a bank all round this oak, and constructed an arcade, covered with ivy and honeysuckle, and since then, the officers of all the regiments quartered at Phalsbourg

were in the habit of coming to this place, which they called Tivoli, to amuse themselves. The wives and daughters of the aldermen and the syndics came to drink of the water of Tivoli on Sundays, and to dance under the oak.

Then, the tall Chevalier d'Ozè, of the Bire regiment, standing at the head of the spring, would raise his glass, turn his eyes up, and talk Latin. The ladies, seated on the grass, in their grand gowns of brocade, their little satin shoes with steel buckles, and their round hats, all covered with poppies and daisies, listened to him, and twisted themselves about in raptures, but did not understand a word of it. And when the quarter-master, from Vénier, took out his little violin and began to play minuets, the Chevaliers de Signeral, de Saint Féral, de Contréglise, all these young fools, each with his little three-cornered hat stuck on over one ear, rose, made a flourish with their legs, and presented their hands to the ladies, who made haste to pull down their gowns, and take their places. Then they danced gravely, nobly. The servants, who were all old soldiers, went to the inn to fetch the baskets of wine, pasties, and sweetmeats, which had been brought from the town. The

poor people from Baraques stood outside in the dusty street, with their noses squeezed against the palisades of the orchard, and looked at these fine folks, especially when the corks flew, and the pasties were cut open. Every one of them wished to be in the place of the ladies and gentlemen, if only for a quarter of an hour. At length, when the night came, the officers gave their arms to the ladies, and the noble company returned home to Phalsbourg.

Many regiments passed through Jean Leroux's Tivoli, up to '91, those of Costella, of Schénan, of Rouergne, of la Fare, of Royal Auvergne. The syndics, the aldermen, and the councillors, came thither also, with their great powdered wigs, and their large black coats all white with flour on the back, and there they enjoyed themselves thoroughly ! And now, of all those who danced, or looked on, I am, no doubt, the only one alive ; if I did not speak of these people, they would no more be thought of than the autumn leaves of 1778.

I was not to be pitied after my godfather took me into his service. I had a pair of shoes every year, and my food. How many would

have been glad to have been in my place ! I knew my good luck, and neglected nothing to please Maitre Jean, Madame Catherine, his wife, and even Valentine, his journeyman, and Nicole, the servant. I kept on good terms with everybody. When I was called, I ran, whether it was to blow the forge bellows, or to climb up to the loft, to throw down the fodder for the beasts ; I would not have done anything to displease even the house cat, for there is a vast difference between sitting before a good flour soup, and a plate of vegetables, ornamented on Sundays with a thick slice of bacon, and eating as much good rye bread as one chooses, and poking one's nose into a scanty bowl of beans, with a little salt, which one's mother is obliged to stint.

When one is well off, one ought to keep so. Accordingly, every morning, at four o'clock in summer, at five o'clock in winter, when the family at the inn were still asleep, and the beasts were chewing the cud in the cow-house, I arrived at the door and knocked twice. The noise awoke the servant, who got up and let me in, in the dark. Then I found a smouldering cinder among the ashes and lighted the lantern. Afterwards, while Nicole

milked the cows, I went to the granary, brought down oats and hay, and served out their pecks to the horses of the carriers, and seed merchants, who slept at the inn on the night before the market days. These travellers would come down-stairs, look about them, and find all in order. After that I helped them to pull their carts out of the cart-shed, put on the harness, and tighten the buckles. And then, when they were going away, calling to their horses, "Hue, Fox ! hue, Rappel !" I would wish them good day, with my little woollen cap on my head. These rough travellers did not so much as answer me, but they were satisfied, they had no fault to find, and that was the chief thing to be desired. When Nicole came back to the kitchen, she would give me a large piece of bread to take with me to the pastures, two or three good onions, and sometimes a hard egg, or a bit of butter. I would put them in my bag, and go into the cowhouse, cracking my whip, and the beasts would come out, one after another, and I would caress them, and then off with us, in single file, to the valley of the Rocks, I bringing up the rear, running like a stag.

Phalsbourg people, who go to bathe in the valley of the Yonne, are acquainted with those masses of rock, piled up almost out of sight, with the scanty bushes which grow in their crevices, and the little stream of water, full of cress, which dries up as soon as the white butterflies come out, in June. Thither I went, for we had right of pasturage on the city lands ; and it was only at the end of August, after the sap had risen, and the young shoots had grown so strong that the beasts would not browse on them any longer, that we went into the forest. In the meantime we lived in the full heat of the sun. The herdsman from Phalsbourg brought only pigs, which made holes in the sand, and lay down in them, huddled up together like hens on a roost, during the heat of the day. They slept so soundly, with their great pink ears hanging over their eyes, that one might have walked on their backs without rousing them. But the goats, which came from Baraques, could not be kept from climbing among the rocks, out of sight. We had to run, to shout, to whistle, to send out dogs after them, and the more we shouted at them, the more they climbed. The boys from the other

villages came also, one with his old blind mare, another with a meagre cow, but most of them with nothing at all, just for the sake of cracking a whip, blowing a whistle, and pulling up turnips and carrots right and left in the fields. When the *garde champetre* caught one of them, he was paraded in the town with a collar of thistles round his neck, but they cared nothing about that ; the only thing they did mind was being flogged in the market place, on a second or third repetition of the offence, according to their age. The *rifleur*, as the executioner used to be called in our part of the country, flayed their back with his whip, made of bullocks' sinews, and if that did not cure them, they were sent to prison.

How often, when I have heard rich people crying out against the Revolution, I have remembered all of a sudden that in the good old times I had seen the *rifleur* flog their grandfathers, or even their grandmothers. And then I could not help laughing, one does see such droll things in this world ! And yet, I must acknowledge that I also regret this old time, but not on account of the *rifleur*, the provost, the nobles, and the Capuchins ; no, no, but because I was young

then, and, if our masters were not good for much, the sky was always beautiful. My big brother Nicholas, and the others, Claude, Lisbeth, and Mathurine came. They took my bag from me, and we had eager disputes. But if they had taken all my provisions from me, Maître Jean, as they well knew, would have paid them a visit at our hovel in the evening, so they left me the lion's share. In addition to this, our Nicholas constituted himself my champion. In those days, the boys of all the villages were in the habit of fighting each other with sticks and stones, and Nicholas, with a fragment of a three-cornered hat hanging down his neck, and an old torn uniform coat, his feet bare, and shouldering a great cudgel, marched like a savage chief at the head of the Baraquins, shouting "forward" so loudly that he could be heard over at Dann.

I could not help loving him, for he constantly called out: "If any one touches Michel, he shall pay for it!" but he took my onions from me, and that annoyed me sorely. They used also to set the beasts to fight with one another, and when their horns clashed together, Nicholas laughed, and cried out:

“The big red one will bowl the other over ! No, now the other is attacking from underneath. Go it ! go it !”

Several times the beasts were severely hurt, and I have even known them to leave a horn on the field of battle.

Towards evening we sat down, our backs against a rock, in the shade, and watched the night falling, while we listened to the sounds in the air, and to the frogs far off in the stream, beginning to croak. That was the signal for our return. Nicholas blew his horn, the echoes replied from all the rocks, the beasts assembled and marched back in single file to Baraques, in a cloud of dust. I put ours into their stalls, supplied the racks with fodder, and supped with Maître Jean, Madame Catherine, and Nicole. In summer when they worked at the forge, I blew the bellows until ten o'clock, and then I returned to my poor father's hovel at the other end of the village to sleep.

Two years passed over thus ; my brothers and sisters continued to beg, and I took all the pains in my power to serve my godfather well. At ten years old, the idea of learning a trade and earning my bread took possession

of me. Maître Jean saw it, and kept me as much as possible at the forge. When I think of this, I seem to hear his voice once more, saying, "Courage, Michel, courage !"

He was a tall large man, with bushy red whiskers, a thick pigtail hung down his back, and his moustaches were so long and thick that he could put them behind his ears. At that time the smiths in the hussar regiments had whiskers, and pigtails tied behind, and I think my godfather had a fancy for resembling them. He had prominent grey eyes, a fleshy nose, round cheeks, and when he laughed, laughed loudly. His leather apron came up to his chin, and in the forge his huge arms were always bare, even in mid winter. He was constantly disputing with Valentine, his journeyman, a tall fellow, but thin and stooped, who considered everything good which existed, the nobles, the monks, the fine ladies, in fact everything !

"But, you stupid animal," Leroux would say, "if these things did not exist, you would have been a master blacksmith, like me, long ago ; you would have had money of your own, you could live at your ease."

"Very well," Valentine would say, "think

as you please, but I am for our holy religion, the nobility, and the king. This is the order established by God."

Then Maître Jean, shrugging his shoulder, would reply :

"Since you think everything is for the best, I am satisfied."

And they would go to work again.

I never met a better fellow than Valentine, but his head was the shape of a sugarloaf, and he reasoned like a goose. It was not his fault, no one could be angry with him.

Madame Catherine held her husband's opinions. And I agreed with Madame Catherine. Things were doing well at the inn. Every year Maître Jean made a considerable sum, and when the assessors were named, for the *corvées*, the taxes, and the other burthens laid on Baraques, he was always on the list with Cochart, the master butcher, and Letumier, the cartwright, who were also very well to do. You must understand that at that time the customary road for the carriers, waggoners, and kitchen gardeners of Alsace, coming to the market in the town, passed through Baraques, and almost

all, both in coming and going, stopped at the inn of the Three Pigeons.

The forge and the inn were both doing well. While we were mending the waggon wheels, or shoeing the horse, the driver went into the Three Pigeons, and drank his pint of wine while he looked out of the window at our work. On fair days the inn was always crowded; customers came in bands, with their carts, their baskets, and their bundles. Before they went away, they had generally taken more than was good for them, and they were in the habit of speaking pretty freely at such times, especially the women, of whose complaints there was no end. They called the nobles and the provosts by their right names, and did not mince matters; they told all sorts of evil tales of their doings, and when their husbands tried to quiet them, they called their husbands fools.

The trading folk of Alsace especially detested the tolls, which took away nearly all their profits, for they had to pay for the privilege of entering Lorraine from Alsace. The poor Jews, who were fleeced everywhere—they made each Jew pay double at the tollgates, so much for himself, and so much for

his ass—did not dare to complain, but there was no scruple on the part of the others. But still, after all the complaints, all the abuse, they would begin to disperse, rising one after another, and saying :—

“Yes, it is all true. They grind us down, they tax us to death, the burthen is heavier every day, but what would you have? Peasants are peasants, and lords are lords. As long as the world lasts they will be high and we shall be low. Let us go! Here, Madame Catherine, take your money, and give us our change. We are off!”

And they would all straggle away; an old woman at the head of the band saying litanies to help them on their way, the other women giving the responses, and the men coming after, with their heads bent, and their faces gloomy. I have often thought that the monotonous buzzing sound of the prayers insensibly prevented them from thinking, and relieved them. The mere idea of coming to their own aid, of getting rid of the collector, the toll-keeper, the nobles, the monks and nuns, of everything from which they suffered in fact, and putting the tithes, the subsidies, the impositions of every kind into their own

pockets, as they did afterwards, had not then occurred to them. They relied entirely upon Providence.

You will easily believe that all this perpetual movement, these complaints, the crowd of Jews, carriers, and peasants, always in the great eating room on fair days, their disputes about the price of cattle, corn, hay, every kind of produce ; their looks when they tapped each other's palms, and called for the invincible pot of wine to "wet the bargain," according to the old custom,—all I saw and observed, in short, advanced my comprehension of men and things. No better school could have been desired, and, if I have prospered, and acquired property at last, it is just because I knew all about the purchase and the sale of land, cattle, and grain since I was a child. The old Jew Schmoule, and Mathias Fischer from Harberg, taught me those lessons, in the old time when they disputed incessantly over every kind of commodity. There was I, while the arguments were going on, with my ears and eyes on the alert, listening to them, while I fetched the jugs and the mugs, and they never minded me.

But what I best liked was to hear Maître Jean read the Gazette after supper.

Now, every little village tavern has its newspaper; nobody thinks anything of the old *Messenger Boiteux*, hanging up behind the window. Each one must know all the affairs of the country, must read his *Courier du Bas Rhin*, or his *Impartial de la Meurthe* at least two or three times a week; he would be ashamed to live like an ass, indifferent to everything going on in the world. But, before '89, the people did not know how to read, and would not have cared to read if they could. Why should they? They had no part in the business of the country, they had no share in its interests, they were there for the sole purpose of paying as many taxes as our good king chose to heap upon them. What should they want with reading? And, besides that, the gazettes were very dear, and though Maître Jean was very well-to-do, he would not have gone to the expense of buying one for his own pleasure only.

Fortunately, Chauvel, the little pedlar, brought us a bundle of papers each time he returned from his rounds in Alsace, Lorraine, and the Palatinate. This was one of the characteristic types which have vanished since the Revolution, this travelling dealer in alma-

nacs, mass-books, salutations to the Virgin, catechisms, and alphabets. He was constantly coming and going from Strasbourg to Metz, from Trèves to Nancy, Pont à Mouson, Toûl, and Verdun. He was to be seen on all the roads, in all the woods, before the doors of the farm-houses, the convents, the abbeys, in the villages, with his coarse *carmagnole*, his gaiters buttoned up to his knees, his heavy shoes studded with nails, his loins bent, a leather strap across his shoulder, and an immense osier basket like a mountain on his back. He sold prayer-books, it is true, but how many contraband books besides, how many copies of Jean Jacques, Voltaire, Ragnal, Helvetius ?

Old Chauvel was the most cunning and the most daring of all the smugglers of Alsace and Lorraine. He was a dry little chip of a man, with a hooked nose, thin lips, and an energetic temperament. His basket looked as if it must crush him, but he carried it stoutly nevertheless. As he passed you by, his little black eyes seemed to look into your soul, he knew at a glance what you were, whether you really wanted to buy something, or, if you belonged to the customs, whether he ought to shun you,

or to offer you one of his books. He had good reason to cultivate his discernment, for, if he had been caught in these contraband dealings, it would have been a case of the galleys.

Whenever he returned from one of his trips, Chauvel came to us, at night, when the inn was empty, and all was quiet in the village. Then he came in with his little Marguerite, who never left him, and when we heard their footsteps, we said :

“ There’s Chauvel. Now we shall hear some news.”

Nicole ran to open the door, and Chauvel came in, his child’s hand in his, and gave us a friendly nod. When I think of this, my memory goes back seventy-five years ; and I see him, with Marguerite, who was as brown as a berry, with long black hair hanging over her shoulders, and who wore a ragged little dress of coarse blue linen.

Chauvel gave the packet of newspapers to Nicole, and took his seat in the chimney-corner behind the stove, the little girl stood between his knees, and Maître Jean cried out, in high good humour :

“ Well, Chauvel, we are getting on ; things are progressing ?”

“Yes, Maître Jean, we are getting on,—people are buying plenty of books,—they are teaching themselves. It is growing, it is growing.”

While he was speaking Marguerite looked at him with profound attention. It was plain that she understood all he said.

They were Calvinists, the real Calvinists of La Rochelle, who had been driven away from thence, and afterwards from Luxheim, and they had been living at Baraques for ten or twelve years. There was no trade or occupation in the place open to them. Their old hut was almost always shut up, when they returned from their wanderings they would open it, and take five or six days' rest, before they were off again with their loads. They were regarded as heretics, as savages, but, for all that, Chauvel had more knowledge to his own single share than all the Capuchins in the country. Maître Jean and this little man understood one another, and were great friends.

Presently Maître Jean began to read, and I sat in my corner, holding my breath with pleasure. I forgot everything, even the danger of returning to our hovel too late, in the hard winter weather, when the village was half

smothered with snow, and wolves had crossed the Rhine, on the ice. I ought to have set out immediately after supper, my father was expecting me, but curiosity about the Grand Turk, about America, about all the countries in the world, possessed me too strongly, and there I stayed until after ten o'clock ! At this moment I can fancy myself once more in my corner, on the left of the old clock ; the walnut wood press and the door of the closet in which Maître Jean slept on my right ; the huge inn table in front of me, pushed against the little windows. Maître Jean is reading, Madame Catherine, a little woman, with rosy cheeks, and her ears covered with a white cap, is spinning, so is Nicole, whose cap comes down like a cushion on the back of her neck. Nicole was as red as a carrot, she was covered with freckles, and had white eyelashes and eyebrows. Yes ! there they are. The spinning-wheels turn, the old clock ticks, now and then there comes a grinding noise in its interior, the weights run down, the hour is struck, and then the tic-tic, tic-tic goes on. Maître Jean in his arm-chair, his spectacles on his nose, his big whiskers brushed up, and his ears red, pays no attention to anything but his newspaper.

Sometimes he looks from under his glasses, and says ;

“ Ha, ha, here’s news from America. General Washington has beaten the English ! Did you see that, Chauvel ? ”

“ Yes, Maître Jean,” replied the pedlar, “ three or four years ago the Americans began their revolt. They would not pay the mass of taxes which the English imposed upon them, and which they were continually augmenting, as other people had done elsewhere,—and now their affairs are prospering.” He smiled for a moment, without loosing his tightened lips, and Maître Jean began to read again. Another time they talked of Frederick the Second, that old Prussian fox, who wanted to renew his former practices.

“ Old rascal ! ” said Maître Jean, “ if it were not for Soubise, he would not attempt to stir. That fool cost us Rosbach.”

“ Yes,” replied Chauvel, “ and therefore his Majesty has given him a pension of fifteen hundred thousand livres.”

Then they looked at each other in silence, and Maître Jean repeated :

“ Fifteen hundred thousand livres to that imbecile creature ! and not a sou forthcoming

towards the repairing of the high road from Saverne to Phalsbourg ! Thousands of peasants have to go a full league out of the direct way, and bread, meat, and wine have all risen in price accordingly."

" Well ! what would you have ?" asked the Calvinist. " That is a political matter. We don't understand politics, you know. We only understand working and paying. It is the King's business to spend the money."

When Maître Jean grew too angry in the course of these discussions, Madame Catherine would rise and go to the lane at the side of the house to listen, and then he would calm himself, knowing what she meant. Prudence was much needed, for there were spies everywhere, and if what we said about the pensions paid to the princes, and about the nobles and the monks, had been overheard, we should have had a bad time of it.

Chauvel and his little girl went away early ; but I always waited until the last moment, until Maître Jean folded up his newspaper. Then he observed me, and said :

" What, are you here still, Michel ? Do you understand anything about these things ?"

Without waiting for my answer :

“ Be off now. To-morrow, early, there is a great deal to be done. It will be market day, remember, and we must be ready betimes.”

Then I remembered that wolves came down to the village, and I lighted a torch before I left the kitchen. The little window opening into the yard was as black as ink, the north wind howled. I hurried away shivering ; and when, outside, I saw the long white street, with its worn wheel tracks stretching up and on, between the old houses half buried under the snow, when I heard the wind whistle, and the wolves howling to each other in the plain, I began to run so fast that in a few minutes I was out of breath. My hair stirred on my head, I jumped over the heaps of snow and refuse in the road, like a goat. It seemed to me as though everything around me were dead, the old thatched roofs, the little cross-barred doors, all had an unusual, terrible effect, seen by the white light of my torch, which shot through the silence like a falling star. But, quickly as I ran, I could see the little streets on the right and left, and shadows going and coming, which so frightened me, that when I reached our poor hovel, I dashed myself against the door like a lunatic.

My poor father, in his old patched clothes of coarse linen, (in such cold !) was bending over the hearth, and cried out to me :

“ My boy, how late you are ! All the others are asleep. Did you stay to hear the news ! ”

“ Yes, father. Take this ; ” said I, putting into his hand the piece of bread which Maitre Jean always gave me after supper.

“ Thank you, my child, ” said my poor father, “ and now go to bed. You must not stay out so late again, there are so many wolves about the country. ”

I lay down beside my brothers, in a large box, without a lid, which, filled with leaves, and covered with a ragged old blanket, served us as a bed. The others, who had been out begging all day, slept soundly. But I lay awake a long while, listening to the gusts of wind, and to a strange sound which occasionally broke the silence, the noise of wolves attacking a stable. They would jump up six or eight feet high against the walls, and fall back into the snow ; then, on a sudden two or three terrible cries were heard, the drove rushed down the street like the wind. They had carried off a dog, and were going to devour him under the rocks. Sometimes I have heard

them smelling and scratching under our door. My father would get up then, and light a bundle of straw on the hearth, and the famished brutes would rush away.

I have always maintained that in that old time the winters were longer, and much more severe, than they are now. The snow was often two or three feet deep, and lay on the ground until April, because of the great forests, which have been cleared since then, and the countless ponds in the valleys which the nobles and the monks would not take the trouble to have drained. These great masses of water, rotten wood, and morass, kept up a damp condition of the earth, and made the air always cold. Now that every one has his share of the land, and that it is properly cultivated, the sun finds its way everywhere, and the spring comes on more quickly, at least, that is *my* opinion. But let the reason be what it may, old people like me will always tell you that in their young days the cold set in earlier, and went away later, and that every year droves of wolves used to attack the stables and lockhouses, and even carry off watchdogs out of the farmyards.

CHAPTER III.

IT was at the end of one of these winters, about three weeks before Easter, that an extraordinary occurrence took place at Baraques. I had overslept myself that morning, as children do sometimes, and I had run as fast as I could to the Three Pigeons, fearing that I should get a scolding from Nicole. My work was indoors just then, for we could not drive the beasts to the pastures, because the snow was only just beginning to melt behind the hedges. But the air was already warm, and all the windows were opened to admit it, and the goats were let out, so that the stables might be cleaned. Claude Hûre was putting his plough to rights under the barn, Pierre Vincent was sewing up a rent in the collar of his packhorse, the busy time was coming, and every one was getting ready for

it. The old people were out before the doors, breathing the fresh mountain air. It was a beautiful day, the first that had come that year. When I drew near the inn, I saw that all the lower windows were open, and that brother Benedict's ass was fastened to the ring of the door, where it stood patiently, with the two osier panniers slung at its sides, and a great earthenware jar on its back. It occurred to me that brother Benedict had come to preach at the inn, according to his custom when there was a concourse of strangers, and that he hoped to extract a little money from them.

Brother Benedict, the "begging brother" of the monastery at Phalsbourg, was an old Capuchin ; he had a hard, stiff, yellow beard, a nose like a fig in shape, covered with little blue veins, and small eyes ; his habit was so old and worn that one could count the threads in it, and had a pointed hood which hung down his back ; his dirty feet protruded from his sandals. Before one heard the sound of his bell, his advent announced itself by the odour of soup and wine. Maître Jean could not endure him, but Madame Catherine always kept a good horse.

him, and when Maître Jean was vexed about it, she would say: "I want to have my own seat in heaven, as well as in church, and you will be very glad to sit down beside me in the next world."

Then he would laugh, and let her have her way.

I went into the inn, and there, in the eating-room, I saw a number of people gathered round the table, carriers from Alsace, people from Baraques, Madame Catherine, Nicole, and Brother Benedict. Maître Jean, standing in the middle, was showing them a sack filled with something like large pieces of brown peel, and he was telling them that these peels came from Hanover; that they produced excellent roots in such great numbers, that the people of that country had enough of them to eat all the year round. He was advising the people to plant them, predicting that if they did so, there would be no more famine at Baraques, and that they would prove a real blessing to us all. Maître Jean said all this simply, and with a smile on his face; Chauvel and Marguerite stood behind him listening.

The others took the peels up in their

hands, looked at them, smelled them, and then replaced them in the sack, laughing, as much as to say :

“ Did ever any one hear of planting bits of peel ? It is contrary to good sense.”

Then Maître Jean grew angry, and said :

“ You are laughing, like fools, without knowing why. Are you not ashamed of yourselves to laugh like that, when I am talking to you seriously ?”

But they only laughed the more, and the Capuchin catching sight of Chauvel, said :

“ Ah ! ah ! so it's the smuggler who has brought you this famous seed, is it ?”

It was quite true, Chauvel had brought us these peels from the Palatinate, where they had been grown for some years, and had told us wonders of them.

“ They come from a heretic,” continued Brother Benedict, “ how do you think Christians can plant them, and look for the blessing of the Lord upon them ?”

“ You will be very glad to get some of the roots to stop your own mouth with, when they are grown,” shouted Maître Jean, in hot anger.

“ When they are grown,” said the Capu-

chin, folding his hands, with an affected air of pity, "when they are grown! Alas! alas! why you have little enough land for your cabbages, your turnips, and your radishes. Let these things alone, they will do you no good, none at all. I, Brother Benedict, tell you so."

"Yes, and you tell me a good many other things that I don't believe either," answered Maître Jean, surlily, as he replaced the sack in the press. But he speedily recovered his temper, and told his wife to give the Capuchin a good slice of bread, which was wise, for fellows of that sort, who manage to get in everywhere, may do one a great deal of harm by their ill word. Then the Capuchin and the rest went out, but I remained in consternation at the ridicule cast upon my godfather. Brother Benedict called out to us from the lane:

"I hope, dame Catherine, you will sow something else as well as the Hanover peelings, for otherwise, if you don't, I shan't have much chance of loading my ass at *your* door. Good-bye, I am going home to pray to the Lord that He may enlighten you."

He spoke through his nose on purpose, the

others went away up the street, laughing, and Maître Jean, looking after them through the window, said :

“ Well, there is what one gets by trying to do good for fools !”

Chauvel answered him :

“ They are not fools, Maître Jean, they are poor creatures who are kept in ignorance that they may be made to work for the nobles and the monks ; it is not their fault, we must not resent it to them. If I had a little bit of ground I would plant those peelings, the people would see my harvest, and they would make haste to follow my example. I assure you again that this plant bears five or six times more than any other grain or vegetable. Its roots are as big as one's hand, excellent to eat, very wholesome, and very nourishing. I have eaten them myself, they are white, floury, something like the chestnut in flavour. They may be dressed with butter, or simply boiled in water, no matter how they are cooked, they are always good.”

“ Rest assured, Chauvel,” returned Maître Jean, “ that I will grow them. These people don't want them ! Very well, then, I shall keep them all to myself. Instead of sowing

them in a quarter of my enclosed ground, I will give the whole space to them."

"You will do well. Every kind of earth is good for growing these roots," said Chauvel, "but sandy soil in particular."

They went out together, still talking on this subject; then Chauvel went home to his cottage, Maître Jean went to his work at the forge, and Nicole and I began to turn the tables and chairs upside down, before we began a general scouring of the eating-room. I have never forgotten that dispute between Maître Jean and the Capuchin, as you will readily understand when I tell you that the brown peels which Chauvel brought were the first seeds of the potato seen among us, of that food which has preserved us from famine for eighty years. Every summer, when I look out of my window at the immense plain of Diemeringen, covered as far as the eye can reach, to the edge of the woods, with thick green clusters which grow, and burst into flower, and change, as it were, the very dust into food for men; when I see, in the autumn, thousands of sacks upright in the fields, and men, women, and children singing and rejoicing while they pile them on their carts; when

I picture to myself the plenty which exists in even the most miserable cottages, in comparison with the terror which came to us all, before '89, when long before the month of December we foresaw the approach of famine ; when I think of the difference, I remember how the poor foolish creatures mocked and laughed in the old time, and I say to myself :

“ Oh, Maître Jean ! oh, Chauvel, why can you not come back to life for one hour during the harvest, and sit at the top of a field, to enjoy the sight of the good you did in this world. It would be worth your while, indeed ! And Brother Benedict, too, it is a pity he cannot come back, and be hissed and laughed at by the peasants, when they should see him and his ass, begging and snivelling along the roads.”

When I think of these things I imagine that the Supreme Being, in His justice, does let them come back, that they are among us, and that each enjoys the results of his good sense or his folly, world without end. God grant that it may be so, this would be the true eternal life.

But, to return to the introduction of the potato among us. Maître Jean seemed very

confident, but his troubles were by no means over. The stupidity of mankind made itself fully manifest on this occasion. A report was spread that Jean Leroux had lost his wits, and was planting the skins of turnips, in order to produce carrots. All comers to the inn looked at him mockingly, and asked him how he was. He was naturally indignant at such treatment, and spoke of it in the evenings very bitterly, much to the grief of his wife. But it did not prevent his digging up the enclosure behind the inn, manuring it well, and planting it with peelings from Hanover. Nicole helped him, and I carried the sack.

The passers-by would come and lean over the wall of the orchard, to look at us, and then wink at one another. Nobody said anything, because they were all afraid that Maître Jean, if pushed beyond his patience, might come out, and answer their remarks with his cudgel.

If I were to tell you all the ridicule we had to endure before the harvest, you would hardly believe me. When the Hanover roots were mentioned, it was a signal for all the imbeciles in the country round, to burst out laughing. Every day of my life I had to

fight the village boys at this pasture. The moment they saw me coming, they would begin.

“Ho! ho! here comes the Hanoverian, who carries the sack for Maître Jean.”

Then I would cut at them with my whip, and they would fall upon me, ten at a time, raining blows upon me, and crying out :

“Down with the roots from Hanover! down with the roots from Hanover!”

Unfortunately, Nicholas and Claude were no longer there. Nicholas was employed as a wood-cutter, and Claude was making mats and baskets with my father, so that I came in for the shower of blows all alone, and single-handed ; but I would not cry, my anger was too great.

You may imagine after all this how I longed to see our roots growing, and my enemies confounded! Every morning, at daybreak, I was hanging over the wall of the enclosure, peering at the ground, and when I had to acknowledge that I could see nothing, I went away quietly, accusing Brother Benedict of having cast a spell on our field. Before the Revolution all the peasants believed in charms and spells, and this belief had led to thousands

of poor wretches being burned alive, in former times. I am afraid, if I could have burned the Capuchin, he would not have had long to live, for my rage against him was terrible.

By dint of fighting with the boys from all the villages around, I had become quite proud of my prowess, and gloried secretly in my defence of our roots, but I never boasted of it. Maître Jean, Madame Catherine, and Valentine knew nothing of all this, but my poor father was astonished when he saw the red welts which covered my legs like bands of ribbon.

"What is this, Michel?" said the poor man. "I thought you were so peaceable and quiet, and now I find you fighting and quarrelling like Nicholas. Take care, my child, your eyes might be slashed out by those whips, and then, what would become of us?" He shook his head thoughtfully, and went on with his work.

In summer, when it was full moon, all the family worked before our door, to save the lamp oil. When the town clock struck ten, my father rose, gathered up his csiers and his brooms, and looking up at the sky, all white with stars, he said :

“ Oh, my God, how great Thou art ! May Thy blessing rest upon Thy children ! ”

These words can never have been said with more veneration and tenderness than by my poor father. One could tell that he understood these things much better than the monks, who recited the *Paternoster*, or *Credo*, just as I take my pinch of snuff, without thinking about it.

Then we went into the house, the day was done. This was in May and June. The barley, the rye, the oats, and hay were growing up all around, but in Maître Jean's enclosure nothing showed above ground. My father had asked me several times about the roots from Hanover, and I told him all the good which this plant might do us.

“ God grant it, my child,” he said. “ We want it badly ; the poverty of the country is increasing day by day ; the taxes are too heavy, and the *corvées* take too many of our days.”

“ Especially,” cried my mother, “ when we are forced to supply those of others. We want a plant to save us, no matter whether it comes from Hanover, or elsewhere This cannot last.”

She was right ! Unhappily there was still no sign of growth in Maître Jean's field. My godfather began to think Brother Benedict had not been so far wrong in laughing at him, and talked of digging up the ground again, and sewing lucern. We were in despair. If Chauvel had not been away on his usual long tramp in Lorraine, Dame Catherine would have overwhelmed him with reproaches, for she put it all down to his account.

One morning, in the beginning of June, between five and six o'clock, I came down the street as usual, to awaken Nicole, feed the beasts, and drive them to the pastures. A great deal of dew had fallen during the night, and the sun was rising red and hot. As I passed by the enclosure, before knocking at the door, I looked over the wall, and what did I see ? on the right, on the left, little tufts of green leaves, in all directions,—the dew had softened the earth, and our roots were coming up by thousands. I jumped down into the field, satisfied myself that it was really the case, and then ran to the back of the house, and rapped at the shutters of the room in which Maître Jean and his wife slept, with all the strength in my knuckles.

"Who is there?" cried Maître Jean.

"Open the window, godfather."

He came and opened it, in his shirt.

"Godfather! the roots are above ground."

Maître Jean had looked angry at being awakened, but when he heard that, his large face smiled all over.

"Above ground?"

"Yes, everywhere, from top to bottom of the field. They have come up in a single night."

"All right, Michel, I'm coming," said he, putting on his clothes hastily. "Catherine, Catherine, the roots are above ground."

His wife arose at once, and dressed herself, and we all went out into the enclosure together. They saw that I had not deceived them; the leaves were out in tufts. Maître Jean said admiringly:

"This is exactly as Chauvel said it would be. The Capuchin and the rest will put on long faces, I expect. But now, we must earth up the stalks; I will do that myself. We must follow Chauvel's directions from point to point. That man is full of good sense; he knows a great deal more than we do; we must follow his advice." Dame Catherine assented.

We went back afterwards to the inn. The windows were opened ; I fed the beasts, and set off without saying a word to anyone. I was too much surprised, myself. But, when I reached the valley, and the boys shouted out : " Here comes the Hanoverian !" instead of getting angry, I merely said :

" Yes, here I am. I am Michel, and I carried Maître Jean's sack." Then, seeing their astonishment, I pointed to the enclosure with my whip, and said :

" Go up there and see for yourself. Our roots are above ground, and more than one of you will be glad to have a few in his cellar."

I was very proud of myself. The boys looked at one another in surprise, thinking :

" Perhaps it is true."

But afterwards, they began to laugh, and to whistle, and to shout at me, but I did not answer them. I had no wish to fight. I was in the right, and that was quite enough for me. When I returned, at six o'clock, nothing had as yet been said in the village, but on the following day the rumour spread that Jean Leroux's roots were growing, and that they were not turnips or radishes, but an entirely new plant. From morning till night the

people came and hung over our walls, looking into the fields in silence,—they did not laugh at us this time ! Maître Jean had cautioned us to say nothing to them ; he wished them to be convinced that they had been wrong, by their own eyes, without being reproached.

But, when Maître Jean saw the Capuchin passing by with his ass, in the evening, he could not resist crying out to him :

“ So there you are, Brother Benedict ! The Lord has blessed the plants of the heretic ! Won't you come and look ? ”

“ Yes,” replied the Capuchin, laughing, “ I have seen them, I have seen them ! And what about it ! I thought they came from the devil, but they come from Our Lord, instead. So much the better ! We shall eat some of them, all the same, if they turn out to be good, mind you ! ”

And so the monks always contrived to be in the right. If a thing succeeded, it was the Lord's doing ; if it turned out ill, it was the devil's doing, and everybody, except themselves, ought to bear the loss.

What stupid creatures men are, to listen to such people ! Just in proportion as old men, sick persons, and children, deserve to be

helped, these idlers deserve to be put down. It is a great consolation to me that I never gave them anything. All beggars, whether they are Capuchins or not, who present themselves at my farm, are received, by my orders, in the kitchen, at noon. They see the servants and farm labourers, fat and hearty, sitting round the table, eating good meat and drinking good wine, as they have a right to do, when they have worked well and long. This sight sharpens their appetite. Then my overseer, old Peter, asks them, with his mouth full, "What do you want ?" and, if they begin to whine, and make grimaces, he hands them a spade or a shovel, and offers them work. Almost invariably they sneak off, with their heads down, thinking :

"So it appears these people will not work for us ! what a bad lot !"

And I, standing at the door, laugh at them, and bid them a good journey.

If the Capuchins and all other idlers of their kind had been treated in this way long ago, they would not have reduced the peasants to misery, and consumed the fruit of their industry, for centuries.

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In July, the enclosure could be seen from Mittelbronn, like one huge green and white bouquet; the flowers were nearly on a level with the wall. We were always thinking about the Hanover roots, and in evenings we talked of nothing else; even the newspapers were forgotten, because, naturally, the affairs of America and of the Grand Turk interested us much less than our own.

In the beginning of September, when we saw that all the flowers had dropped off, and the stalks were beginning to wither, we thought :

“ It is time to dig out the roots ! ”

But Maître Jean said :

“ Chauvel told us that they ought to be dug up in October. On the first we will try a spade full, and if we must wait longer, we will wait.”

On the first of October, in the foggy morning, at ten o'clock Maître Jean came out of the forge, went into the kitchen, took a pickaxe from behind the door, and went down to the enclosure. We all followed him. He stopped before the first tuft, and struck the pickaxe into the ground, and when he had turned the soil, and we saw large pink

tumbling about, when we saw as many come out on the second and third strokes, and that five or six sufficed to uncover enough to fill a basket, we looked at each other in astonishment. We could not believe our eyes.

Maitre Jean said nothing. He went a little further on, selected a second spot in the centre of the field, and once more struck his axe into the earth. This spot contained as many potatoes as the other, and even larger ones. Then my godfather said :

"I see what they are now. Next year the two acres of ground on the hill side must be planted with these roots. The rest I will sell, and very dear too, for if one gives people anything for nothing, they think nothing of it."

His wife had gathered up the potatoes in a basket, and he carried it into the house. Then he sent me to bring Chauvel, who had just returned from a long tramp in Lorraine. I ran off to fetch him, and he came at once, guessing what he was wanted for, and smiling. When he entered the kitchen, Maitre Jean, whose eyes shone with joy, showed him the basket, and cried out in his lusty voice :

"All those came out of six feet, and there are as many more in the pot."

"Yes," said Chauvel, who did not seem at all surprised, "that's it, I told you so."

"You will dine with us, Chauvel, we are going to eat some of them, and if they are good, this means plenty and wealth for Baraques."

"They are very good, you may trust me," said the pedlar, "and this will be a very fine thing for you. You will make a nice little sum of money by selling the seed."

"We shall see," said Maître Jean, overjoyed, "we shall see."

Dame Catherine had broken the eggs for an omelet, and the soup was steaming. Nicole went to the cellar, and brought up a flagon of the white wine of Alsace; and then we set the table.

My godfather and Chauvel went into the public room. They knew that the roots were a prosperous speculation, but, that they should abolish famine, and do more for us than the king and the nobles and all those who were lauded to the skies as our benefactors, never came into their heads, especially Maître Jean's, who, without entirely forget-

ting the rest, looked chiefly to his own profit in the matter.

"If they only taste as well as turnips," he said, "I shall be satisfied."

"They are much better than turnips," said Chauvel, "and they may be eaten in several ways. You may be quite sure if I had not known the plant was good, and would be useful to you and to everybody, I would not have put the seed in my basket,—it is heavy enough without that,—and I would not have advised you to plant them in your enclosure."

"No doubt, but one may speak for all that. I am like Saint Thomas, I must see, and touch."

"You are in the right," said the little Calvinist, laughing. "But you shall touch; I see Nicole laying the table. We shall soon know."

All was ready. In those days the masters and the male servants ate their meals together, but the master's wife and her female servants waited on them, and did not sit down to table until after the repast.

We had just sat down, Maître Jean and Chauvel next the wall on one side, and little Marguerite and I on the other, and were

about to begin, when Maître Jean exclaimed, —“ Why here's Christophe !”

The new comer was M. Christophe Materne, a tall, red, rough man, like all the Maternes. Maître Jean had seen him passing the windows, presently he came in, his beaver under his arm, a thick ash stick in his hand, and his old three-cornered hat on his grey head.

“ Ha !” he shouted, in his big voice, “ so here you are together again, you plotters ! Are you conspiring to restore the Edict of Nantes ?”

“ Welcome, Christophe,” said Maître Jean, “ you are just in time. Sit down, and look here.”

I took the cover off the soup tureen.

“ That's right,” said the curé, heartily, as he hung his hat against the wall, and put his stick in the corner near the clock, “ that's right, I see what you are at ! You want to keep me quiet, but it will not do, Jean, Chauvel is corrupting you ; I must inform the provost.”

“ And who will supply the curés with their Jean Jacques Rousseau ?” said Chauvel, with a cunning smile.

“ Hush, you blabber !” replied the curé,

"after all, the whole of your philosophies is not worth a verse of the gospel."

"Of the gospel! No; what have we Calvinists ever asked for but the gospel?"

"Yes, yes," said M. Materne, "there are very good people among you, Chauvel, we know that well, but we also know the other side of the story."

Then, addressing Marguerite and me, and putting his heavy leg between us, he said, kindly:

"Make room for me, my children."

We moved away our plates to the right and left, and the curé sat down and began to eat his soup, while I peeped at him from the end of the bench, hardly daring to look up from my plate, I thought him so terrible with his great, grey, bright eyes, his rough head, and his hands like a giant's.

The curé Christophe was one of the best of men. Instead of living quietly on his tithes, and saving money for his old age, like the other priests, he thought of nothing but working for others, and devoting himself to them. In winter, he taught the village school himself, and in the fine weather, when the children had to drive the beasts to pasture, he

worked from morning to night, carving images of saints, in old oak or stone, for the parishes which were too poor to buy them. You brought him a bit of wood, or a block of stone, and he sent you back Saint John, the Blessed Virgin, or the Eternal Father. Maître Jean and M. Materne came from the same village, and were old and close friends.

"When are you going to re-open your schools, Christophe?"

"Next week," replied the curé. "In fact I am now on my way to Phalsbourg to buy books and paper. I had thought of beginning on the 20th September, but I had to finish a Saint Peter for the parish of Aberschviller, where they are re-building the church. I had promised, and I like to keep my promises."

"So it's settled then, for next week?"

"Yes, we shall begin on Monday."

"You must take this lad for me," said my godfather, pointing to me, "he is my godson, the son of Jean Pierre Bastien. I am sure he will learn with all his heart."

On hearing this I turned red with pleasure, for I had long wished to go to school. M. Christophe turned towards me:

"Let me see," said he, laying his big hands on my head, "look at me."

I looked at him shyly.

“What is your name?”

“Michel, sir.”

“Well then, Michel, you shall be welcome. The door of my school is open to everybody, and the more scholars I have, the better pleased I am.”

“That’s right,” said Chauvel, “that’s what I call speaking out.”

And then Maître Jean, raising his glass, drank to the health of his friend Christophe.

At the present time, those who go quietly to the village schools, and are taught, for next to nothing, by an honest, well educated man—often by one well qualified to fill a better place—cannot imagine how enviable we who were born before the Revolution, would have thought them. They cannot realise the joy of a poor boy like me when the curé consented to receive me, and I could say to myself:

“I shall learn to write and read; I shall not live in ignorance, like my poor parents.”

No, to understand these things one must have felt them, one must have lived in those days. I was almost dazzled by my happiness. I would have liked to run home at once to tell my father and mother the great good news, I could hardly sit quietly at the table.

All that I remember afterwards, on that day, was that Dame Catherine brought the potatoes to us in a basket. They had been boiled in water; the peels were broken and crumbling, they were white and flowery, and M. Christophe leaned over to look at them, and asked, "What is all this, Jean? Where do those things come from?" My godfather having bidden us to taste them, we found the roots so good that we all said we had never eaten anything we liked so much before, and when the curé heard that these were the very roots which had been laughed at all through the country, and that a quarter of an acre would yield at least fifteen sacks, he could hardly believe it.

"Can it be possible?" he said, "it seems too good to be true."

Madame Catherine then brought us a great bowl full of milk, to enable us to eat more plentifully, and you should have seen how the elbows and the mouths went then! At last M. Christophe put down his spoon, and said:

"We have had enough, Jean. Don't give us any more. They are *too* good."

And so we all thought. Before we went away, the curé asked to see our enclosure.

Chauvel explained to him all about the cultivation of Hanover roots, and when he told him that they grew much better in the sandy mountain soil, than in the rich earth of the plains, he said :—

Listen to me, Chauvel, and mark my words. You, by bringing those peels in your basket, and you, Jean, by planting them in the ground, in spite of the ridicule of the Capuchins, and the other fools, have done more for our country, than all the monks in the three bishoprics have done for centuries. These roots will be the bread of the poor!”

He requested my godfather to preserve some of the seed for him, saying that he would sow it in his garden, to set an example, and that in two or three years half his parish should be planted with these good roots. Then he went on his way to Phalsbourg.

This is the story of the introduction of the potato into our country. I thought it would please the peasants to know how it came about.

The following year, Maître Jean planted potatoes in his square field, on the rising ground, and he dug out more than sixty sacks, but a report was spread that they produced leprosy, and no one would buy them ; except

Létumier, from Baraques, and two labourers from the mountain. Happily, the next autumn, the news reached us, by the gazette, that a good man named Parmentier had planted these roots in the environs of Paris, and had presented some to the King, which his Majesty had deigned to eat ! After that, everybody wanted to have them, and Maître Jean, who was indignant at the shocking stupidity of the people, sold them the seed, at a high price.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM this time I began to live. He who does not know anything, and has not the means of learning, is no better than a poor pack-horse ; he works for others, he enriches his owners, and when he becomes weak and old, they get rid of him.

Every morning, at dawn, my father roused me, while my brothers and sisters were still asleep. I dressed myself noiselessly, and went out with my little bag, my sabots on my feet, a carrier's cap on my head, and my log of wood under my arm. It was cold at the beginning of the winter ; I shut the door, and ran off, blowing my fingers to warm them.

How plainly I see myself, after all these years, and the road, up hill and down, the old leafless trees at the wayside, the deep silence

of winter in the forest. And then, the village of Lutzelbourg at the bottom of the valley, with its pointed spire, and its weathercock up in the grey clouds, the little cemetery beneath, where the tombs were buried in the snow, the old houses, the river, Father Sirvin's old mills! Is it possible that the things of one's childhood dwell for ever in one's memory, when all others are so soon forgotten.

I usually arrived before the other pupils, and found the schoolroom empty. The curé's mother, a bent and wrinkled little old woman, called Madame Madeleine, who ran about as actively as a mouse, would be making the fire. I always placed my log beside the stove, and my sabots upon it, to dry. I see the place so plainly now, the whitewashed beams of the ceiling, the little row of benches, the large dark picture on the wall, between the two windows; M. Christophe's chair, on a little platform at the bottom, and above the chair a large crucifix.

Each pupil was bound to sweep the room in his turn, but I began, while waiting for the others. They came from Hultenhausen, Baraques, and even Cheorskof. There I met

all my old comrades, Louis Frossard, the mayor's son, who died young, during the Revolution ; Clement, who was killed at Valmy ; Dominique Clausse, who set up as a cabinet-maker at Saverne ; François Mayer, tailor in the 6th Hussars, who retired in 1820, very rich, they say, but I know nothing about it ; Antoine Thomas, commandant in the old Guard ;—how many times he has come to see me, even at the farm, since 1815 ! We told all our old stories over again, and I always gave him the best room in the house. Then there was Jacques Messer, Hubert Perrin, and fifty others who would never have been anything but for the Revolution.

Before '89, the cobbler's son remained a cobbler, the woodcutter's son remained a woodcutter. No one emerged from his own class. At the end of thirty or forty years, there you were, at the same place, doing the same thing ; a little more plump, a little more lean, but that was all ! Now, we may rise ; with industry and good sense, there is no reason to despair of anything. The son of a simple peasant, provided he has talent and good conduct, may one day govern France.

Let us praise the Lord for having so en-

lightened us, and let us rejoice in this happy change.

To return to my old comrades. Now they are all gone. Last year only two of us remained, Joseph Broussousse, the hatter at Phalsburg, and I. When I went to buy a straw hat, in the spring, Broussousse knew my voice, and came out, drawing one leg after him, and crying :

“Ha ! there’s Michel Bastien, *I* know.”

Nothing would do but that I must go into the back shop, and share a bottle of his old Bordeaux. And Broussousse, as he accompanied me to the door, laughed, and said—

“Well, well, you see we are still holding on, Michel. But, attention ! When I take my passport, it will be time for you to have yours *visé*.”

Poor Broussousse, last autumn his time came ; but yet, I do not feel inclined to have my passport *visé*. No, no, before that I must finish this history, and then I will invent some other excuse for waiting a little, There is no hurry, there will always be time enough for that journey.

It was at M. Christophe’s school that I met all my old friends, many of whose

names I shall perhaps remember later on. At eight o'clock they would all come trooping in, shouting, "Good morning, M. Christophe!" Whether he was there or not, they shouted out this salutation all the same. We gathered round the stone, laughing and pushing one another. But as soon as the curé's heavy step was heard in the lane we all became silent, our alphabet on our knees, and our noses bent over it, hardly breathing. For M. Christophe did not like noise or disputes; I have seen him more than once, when the boys were poking each other with their elbows, stand up quietly, lift one of them off the bench by the collar, and drop him outside the door like a kitten.

M. Christophe would look round from the doorstep to see whether everything was in order. Nothing stirred, one could hear the crackling of the fire. Then he would seat himself, and tell us to "go on," and the whole assembly would begin with "Ba, ba." This went on until the curé stopped it; and then he would call us up in our turn.

"Jack, Michel, Nicholas, come here!" We would go up, cap in hand.

"Who created you and placed you in this world?"

"God."

"Why did God create you, and place you in this world?"

"To adore him, to love him, to serve him, and by this means to obtain everlasting life."

This was a very good method of teaching us. Simply by hearing it repeated by the others, I learned my catechism in three months. He also made us learn questions and answers from the little book, and at eleven o'clock he would come round the benches to see if we were studying, and if he heard you spelling softly to yourself, he would pinch your ear, and say:

"That's right, you will get on!"

Every time he said this to me, I was in the utmost delight. He even said to me one day:

"You may tell Maître Jean that I am satisfied with you. You hear me? Give him that message for me."

That day I would not have called the mayor, the alderman, and the governor my cousins; and yet I did not tell Maître Jean,

in order that I might not fall into the sin of pride.

At the beginning of the month of March I knew how to read. Unfortunately Maître Jean could not keep me to do nothing, all the year, and when spring returned I had to betake myself once more to the pastures. But I had my catechism in my bag, and while the goats climbed about the rocks, I sat comfortably in a tuft of heather, under the shade of an oak or a beech tree, and read over and over again all the curé had taught me. So that instead of forgetting my lessons as the boys from Hultenhausen, Cheorskof, and elsewhere did, I knew them better at the end of the autumn, and M. Christophe put me into the class with the "rich ones" from Lutzelbourg, as we called the boys who could come to school all the year round. I learned everything that was taught at that time in our villages ; reading, writing, and elementary arithmetic, and on March 15th, 1781, I made my first communion. That was the end of my studies. I had learned as much as Maître Jean knew, for the rest I must trust to my own resolution and industry.

From thenceforth my godfather took me

altogether into the forge. He gave his cattle to old Yeri, the village herdsman, to be driven to the pasture, but I continued to look after them in the stable, while at the same time I was learning a trade.

Madame Catherine and Nicole had a great deal of consideration for me. In the evening, as Maître Jean's eyes were sometimes fatigued by the fire in the forge, it was I who read out the newspapers and little books of all sorts which Chauvel brought us. I read many things which of course I could not understand. For instance, when the newspapers talked about the rights of the crown, the taxes upon the state, and upon the elective provinces, I was quite bewildered. Do what I would, I could not get the meaning of it into my head. I knew that it meant our money, which had to be given to the king, but I did not understand how it was that they took it from us.

But, such things as concerned our own country, I perfectly understood. When the *Gazette* talked of the *gabelle* as I went to the town every week to buy salt for the use of the house at six *sous* per pound, which would be more than twelve *sous* of our present

money, I could picture to myself the salt taxer screaming through his wicket at some poor devil :

“ You did not come last Tuesday ! You are buying smuggled salt, and I have my eye upon you. Take care ! ”

You must understand that not only were we obliged to buy our salt at the government bureau, for much more than its value, but we were forced to buy so much a head per week.

When tithes were in question, I pictured to myself the *paulier*, with his crook and his cart, crying out to us in the fields during the harvest :

“ Look out there ! I’m coming for the eleventh ! ”

And then, even in stormy weather, when we were afraid of rain, we were forced to keep our sheaves on the ground, arranged in lines, and the *paulier* would walk along them leisurely, and slowly take away the best and pile them upon his cart.

I had no difficulty, therefore, in understanding the question when it concerned tithes.

I also understood the taxes on liquor, the duty, amounting to the thirteenth, on all

sales, the tolls, the collective duties, the reserved duties, the rights of tariff, of entry, of city toll, &c., &c., &c. I had only to picture to myself the barriers, the markets, the townhall, with the sworn inspectors, the markers, the gaugers, the wine and beer tasters, the inspectors of hay and grain, the controllers of the pig market, the inspectors of slaughter houses, and a thousand other officials, coming, going, handling, looking into, opening, unpacking, stopping, taxing, and confiscating—all that I understood right well.

Chauvel explained the rest.

“You want to know what a *pays d’élection* is,” he said to me, sitting as usual quietly behind the stove ; “it is not difficult to understand, Michel. A *pays d’élection* is an old province of France, one of the earliest, like Paris, Soissons, Orleans, where royal rule began. In those places the king’s intendants do everything, and are everything ; they impose taxes just as they please ; they lash the ass as heavily as they choose, they are the masters, no one dares to complain, because if any complaints were made, they would be referred to them, and judged by them.

Formerly the people of these places nominated their assessors ; they arranged their load so as to carry it with the least pain. These assessors were said to be elected, hence the phrase '*pays d'élection.*' But, for the last two hundred years the assessors are nominated by the intendants, which suits them much better."

Here, he winked.

"You understand, Michel?"

"Yes, M. Chauvel."

"Well then, in the '*pays d'état,*' or conquered countries, like our Lorraine, like Alsace, Burgundy, and Brittany, it is different. Here, the intendants are not all-powerful. The nobles and the bishops meet together, from time to time, in provincial assemblies ; they vote the taxes, first for the share of the province in the general expense of the kingdom—this is what they call the free gift—and it all goes to the king ; and then, for their own expenses—their roads, their watercourses, their buildings, &c. The conquered provinces made certain conditions before they surrendered ; the nobles and the bishops have an understanding between themselves. Their privileges and

advantages were secured in the capitulation. As for us, poor devils, why; we pay, as we are born to pay, and that's all about it. That is our sole right, and no one cares to deprive us of it. Not only do we pay, as we always did, the charges of our own provinces, but since the capitulation we pay the free gift to the king, in addition. That is exactly what we have gained in the transaction. You understand, Michel?"

"Yes, M. Chauvel."

"Very well. Try to remember."

Maître Jean was working himself into a rage.

"It is not just," he said, dashing his strong clenched fist upon the table, "it is not just. Are we all Frenchmen, yes or no? Are we all of the same blood, of the same nation? Why do some of us vote the taxes and others pay them? Why are not the expenses and the advantages common to us all?"

"Of course it is not just," replied Chauvel, quietly. "Neither are the barriers, and the tolls, and the corvées, and the payments in kind, and all the other charges which press upon the poor only; while the nobles, and the monks, and even the commoners who are on the way to becoming nobles, have nothing, or

next to nothing, to pay, just. But what is the good of thinking about that? What is the good of talking about it? We cannot change the facts."

He never got angry. I remember to have heard him relate the sufferings of his parents and relatives, with the utmost calmness. He told us how they had been driven from La Rochelle, their lands, their houses, and their money taken from them. How, all through France they had been persecuted, and their children taken from them by force, to be brought up in the Catholic religion. He told us how, in later years, at Luxheim, dragoons had been sent to convert them at the point of the sword; when his father had escaped into the forest of Graufthal, whither his mother and the children followed him the next day, renouncing everything rather than their religion. He told us how his grandfather had been sent to the galleys at Dunkerque, and passed thirteen years on his bench, fastened to it by the leg, with a ruffian for his master, who beat the Calvinist galley-slaves so mercilessly that many of them died under the torture. And I shuddered when he went on to tell us, as calmly as ever, that when the ships were fight-

ing, the unhappy wretches could see the English pointing their great guns, with their terrific charges, close to them—their galleys within a few feet, and they could not move. Then the firing would begin, the balls would come crashing among them, and in the pauses of the battle, the sailors would come and tear their broken limbs out of the chain, and fling them into the sea, like so much rubbish, to be cleared away with the rest. He would tell us these things, which made us tremble with rage, crumbling some snuff in the hollow of his hand all the time; while little Marguerite, her face quite colourless, looked at him steadily with her great black eyes, in silence.

He always ended by saying:

“Yes, this is what the Chauvels owe to the Bourbons, to Louis the Great, to Louis the Well-beloved. And I, myself, here present, I am nothing, I have no civil existence. Our good king, when he ascended the throne, did just the same as the others. In the presence of his bishops, and his archbishops, he swore to exterminate us. These were his words:

“‘I swear to apply myself sincerely, and to the full extent of my power, to exterminate,

in every part of my dominion, all heretics whom the church has condemned.' Your curés who draw up all the formalities of life, and who ought to be at the service of all Frenchmen, will not draw up our certificates of marriage, birth, or death. The law forbids us to be judges, councillors, or schoolmasters. We have no place in the world ; all the roots of social life are cut off for us, and nevertheless, we do no harm ; everyone is forced to admit that we are honest people."

"It is abominable," said Maître Jean, "but, Chauvel, Christian charity ?"

"Christian charity ! We have always had it, happily for our persecutors ! If we had not !——But, everything is paid, one day or another, and with compound interest, believe me. If not in one year, in ten ; if not in ten years, in a hundred—or a thousand ; but, sooner or later, everything is paid for."

You will easily understand, after what I have told you, that Chauvel would not have been content, like Maître Jean, with small measures of relief, applied to the taxes, and the militia. One had only to see his pale cheeks, his little bright black eyes, his thin, hooked nose, his close-set lips, his bony back,

bent by the constant weight of his pack, his slight limbs, strong as iron ; one had only to observe all this, in order to feel : " This is a man who will have all or nothing ! He will have patience as long as patience is required ; he would risk the galleys a thousand times over to sell the books which teach his doctrines, his ideas ; he fears nothing, he distrusts everything, and, if an opportunity should arise, it would be dangerous to go against him. His little daughter resembles him ; she might be broken, she never could be bent."

Without precisely thinking all this—I was too young—I felt it. I had a great respect for Chauvel, I always took my cap off to him, and I said to myself, " He is all for the good of the peasants. We are of one mind."

About this time the newspapers were speaking of a "deficit," and my godfather used to say that he could not understand how this deficit had come about. The people paid their taxes punctually ; they never got either grace or credit for a *sou* ; the taxes were augmented day by day, and therefore the deficit could be the result of dishonesty only. There were thieves somewhere, and

our good king would do well to have them discovered. These thieves could not possibly be people in our class, because, when the taxes had once been collected, the peasants never saw a single coin of all the money any more, never knew what became of it. The necessary conclusion therefore was that the thieves were persons in the royal household, or at least in the king's employment.

When Maître Jean insisted on this, which was perfectly clear to me, Valentine would lift up his hands, and protest :

"Maître Jean, Maître Jean, what are you thinking of? The king has nobody about him but princes, dukes, barons, bishops, people of the highest honour, who place their conscience far above riches."

"You think so, do you?" said Maître Jean. "Go on thinking so, if you like ; and leave me to my own opinions. You will never make me believe that the workmen, the peasants, or even the citizens, who never have anything to do with the money, except to pay it, are the cause of the deficit. No one can steal from a coffer which he cannot lay his hand on ; so that, if the princes are not the thieves, their lackeys must be."

Maître Jean was right ; for before the Revolution, the people had no representatives, the nobles and the bishops had everything in their own hands, so that they only were responsible.

But, in reality, nothing certain was known about the deficit. People talked about, and the newspapers mentioned it, vaguely, when the king named Neckar, a merchant from Geneva, finance minister. This man, whose ideas were those of a merchant anxious to avoid bankruptcy, proposed to prepare an account of the whole of France, on one side the receipts, on the other the expenses. The gazettes called this M. Neckar's Report.

This was the first time, for centuries, that the peasants were told what had become of their money, because, to give an account to those who pay, is quite a mercantile idea, and the nobles, the abbés, and the monks were much too proud and too saintly to have any notions of that kind.

When I think of the Report of M. Neckar, it seems like a dream ! Every evening Maître Jean talked about it ; the war in America, Washington, Rochambeau, Lafayette,

all were put aside for this report, which he pulled to pieces, groaning, and exclaiming :

“ For the king’s household, so much ! For the queen’s household, so much ! For the household of the princes, so much ! Swiss regiments, so much ! Salaries of receivers, farmers, registrars, cashiers, so much ! Communities, priories, religious houses, so much ! Treasury pensions, so much ! ” and the sums always millions !

I never saw a man so angry.

“ Ah,” he cried, “ now we see the origin of our terrible poverty, now we know why the people are bare-footed, and thousands of men perish of cold and hunger, while the land lies waste ! Ah, yes, now we understand it all ! God in Heaven ! To think that these wretched creatures give five hundred millions every year to the King, and that it is not enough !—that there is a deficit of fifty-six millions ! ”

The horror and grief in his face were heart-rending.

“ Yes, it is very sad,” said Chauvel, “ but we ought to remember that we are fortunate in being told where our money goes to. Formerly we used to think—what do they do with this quantity of money ? Where does it go

to ? Do they throw it into the sea ? Now, at least, when we pay our thousand taxes, we shall know how they are disposed of."

This made Maître Jean still more angry.

"You are right, Chauvel," he said, "It will be a great comfort to me to think that I am working to buy palaces for M. de Soubise, that I deprive myself of everything, in order that the Count D'Artois may give fêtes which cost two hundred thousand livres each. I toil from morning till night, that the Queen may give the first noble beggar who asks her, more money than I have earned in my whole life. That is indeed a source of rejoicing !"

In spite of all this, however, he was pleased at the idea that we were to have accounts furnished to us, for the future, and he said, after he had got over his passion :

"We have not had so good a minister since Turgot. M. Neckar is an honest man, and will follow his example. Turgot wished to relieve the people, to diminish the taxes, to abolish wardenships, and to furnish public accounts, and so, the nobles and the bishops forced them to resign. God send they may not do the same in M. Neckar's place, and that our good king may support him. Now, the men who

are ruining us, will be ashamed, they will not dare to persevere in their abominable lavishness. When they pass by a poor man toiling in the fields, they will be forced to blush at the thought that the poor wretch despises them; they will think: he has read M. Neckar's Report, he knows that my carriage, my horses, my fine feathers, have been purchased by his toil, that I have got them by begging for them."

Maitre Jean was especially delighted when he found that M. Neckar terminated his Report, by stating that in order to meet the deficit, the privileges of the religious houses, and of the nobles, must be abolished, and the same taxes levied upon them, as upon the peasants.

"That is the best news of all," he said; "M. Neckar has capital ideas."

The report of a great change imminent spread through the country, the good news found its way everywhere. Chauvel and his little Marguerite were a long while absent, and during that time they did nothing but sell M. Neckar's Report. They bought them at Pont-à-Mousson for Lorraine, and at Kehl for Alsace. I do not know how many of these

little books they sold, Marguerite told me at the time, but so many years have passed since then !

On market days, one heard nothing talked of, but the abolition of privileges, and the equalization of the taxes.

“ Ha, Maître Jean, so it appears, at length, in the latter days our good lords and our abbés are to be obliged to pay their share ?”

“ Yes, indeed, Nicholas, at last ! that is the fault of this rascally deficit. The old taxes are not enough, the people will never be able to pay the deficit. A terrible thing, is it not ? Such a misfortune !”

And then they all laughed, and took a friendly pinch of snuff all round, in their compassion for the poor monks, the unfortunate nobles.

This happened in '81, but the newly awakened confidence was soon shaken. We learned that Count D'Artois, the Queen, Marie Antionette, and the former minister Maurepas could not endure this shop-keeping minister who talked of keeping public accounts. Uneasiness began to prevail, and our distrust became more and more deep-seated. On Tuesday the 9th June, 1781, Maître Jean having

sent me into the town to buy salt, I found there was a great stir. The band of the Brie regiment was playing under the windows of the Marquis de Talarn. The drums were beating before the provost's hotel, and the mayor's house. It seemed like a fête! But the people were gloomy; the sellers of vegetables and poultry, who sat on their benches as usual, did not cry their wares; there was nothing to be heard but the music in the great square, and the drums in the streets on the right and left. There was a crowd before the bureau, young officers, cadets as they were then called, went by in threes and fours, gesticulating and laughing. The salt salesman counted his money, passed the bag of salt to me through the wicket, and I went away. At the corner of the market place, some salt factors were talking:

"There's an end of it!" said one of them, "we need not reckon on anything now; the king has dismissed him."

Immediately the idea came into my head that they were talking of Neckar. I hurried back to Baraques. The old soldiers on guard at the German gate were smoking their pipes, and playing at draughts as usual. When I reached the forge, I found that Maître Jean

already knew all, he had been told by the dealers on their way back from the town. They were still at the forge relating what they had learned. My godfather was saying :

"It is not possible ! No, it is not possible ! If M. Neckar resigns, who will pay the deficit ? The others will go on just as usual ; they will give their *fêtes*, their hunting parties, and their balls ; they will throw away the money as they did before, and the deficit instead of diminishing will increase. I tell you it is not possible."

But when I told him what I had seen—the rejoicings of the cadets, the band playing before the Governor's hotel, and all the rest of it, he groaned heavily.

"So, so," said he, "then I see it is true, and the great man has been turned off. I had thought our good king would have supported him."

He would have said a great deal more, but that we did not know all the people who were there, in the doorway, and who listened and looked at us. He took up his hammer, saying :

"Courage. Let us work briskly,—the pension of Soubise has to be paid. Get on, boys !"

He laughed so loud, that they could hear him opposite, at the inn, and Dame Catherine leaned over the door, to see what was going on.

The dealers went their way, and many more followed them that day, silently and sadly. Nothing more was said then, but, in the evening, when the door and the shutters were shut, and we were all together, Maître Jean spoke out of the fulness of his heart :

“The Count d’Artois and our beautiful queen,” said he, “have got the better of the king at last. What a misfortune it is when a man allows himself to be led by an extravagant woman ! He may have every good quality, he may love his people, he may abolish *corvées*, and the question, but he cannot abolish fêtes, dances, pleasure of all sorts. On that head the extravagant woman is not to be convinced ; she would see everything else perish, so that her enjoyments were secure ; it is for them she was created, for them she lives ! She must have bouquets, and perfumes, and compliments.

“Look at that poor notary, Régonie ; a man who was well off, who inherited money from his father and his grandfather, and who

had nothing to do but live out his hundred years in peace. He has the misfortune to choose Mademoiselle Jeannette Desjardin for his wife ; and then, he must go to all the fêtes, to all the weddings, to all the christenings. Well, at the end of five or six years, the bailiffs make their appearance ; they empty the house, they sell the land and the furniture ; poor Régonie is sent off to the galleys, and Madame Jeanette travels about with the Chevalier de Bazin, of the Rouergne regiment. That is what an extravagant woman does ; this is the end of all such things."

The longer Maître Jean talked, the more angry he became ; he did not dare to predict that our queen, Marie Antoinette, would lead us all into misfortune, but it was easy to guess that he meant it. He went on talking for at least half an hour, he seemed as if he could not leave off.

It was a wretched day ; the rain was falling, and the wind was whistling, and we were destined to learn more ill news before it closed. At nine o'clock, just as Nichole was making up the fire for the night, and I was putting a sack over my shoulders, before running home, we heard two heavy blows struck upon the shutters.

Maître Jean had spoken so loud that, notwithstanding the wind and the rain, he might have been heard, and we all looked at each other, more or less frightened. Dame Catherine was already carrying the lamp into the kitchen, to pretend that every one in the house was asleep, and our faces had turned pale at the mere idea of a visit from the sergeants, when we heard a loud voice outside :

“It is I, Jean ; it is Christophe. Open the door.”

You may suppose how we drew our breath !

Maître Jean went out into the lane, and Dame Catherine brought back the lamp.

“Is it you ?” said Maître Jean.

“Yes, it is I.”

“How you frightened us !”

They came in together, and we saw in a moment that M. Christophe was not pleased, for, instead of saluting Madame Catherine, and everyone else, as he always did, he took no notice of anybody, but, as he shook the rain from his three-cornered hat, he said, angrily,

“I have just come from Saverne, where I have seen this famous Cardinal de Rohan. Good God ! good God ! can this really be a

cardinal, a prince of the church? Ah, when I think of *that*!”

He was pale with anger. The rain shone on his cheeks, and ran down on his soutane. He took off his collar, and put it in his pocket. He strode to and fro. We looked at him, in mute surprise, but he did not seem to see us, and spoke to Maître Jean only.

“Yes, I have seen this prince,” he said, “this great dignitary, who ought to set us an example of good morals, and all the Christian virtues. I actually saw him drive his own carriage at full gallop down the high street of Saverne, over all the china and delft set out for sale, and he was laughing like an idiot. What a scandal!”

“You know that Neckar has been dismissed?” said Maître Jean.

“Do I know it?” he answered, in a tone of contempt. “Have I not just seen the superiors of all the monasteries in Alsace, the Capuchins, the barefooted Carmelites, the Barnabites, the whole tribe of mendicants, defiling through the antechambers of His Eminence? Ha! ha! ha!”

He strode about the room. He was splashed up to his neck with mud, he was

drenched to the bones with rain ; but he did not feel it ; he shook his rough head, he spoke, as though he was speaking to himself :

“ Yes, Christophe, yes, these are the princes of the church ! Go and ask the protection of His Eminence for a poor man, with a wife and children ; go and make your complaint to him who ought to be the support and defender of the clergy ; go and tell him that the officials of the customs, on the pretext of searching for smuggled goods, have come into your presbytery, and forced you to give up the keys of your cupboards, and your cellar. Tell him that it is an indignity to force a citizen, no matter whom he may be, to open his door, by day or by night, to armed men, who wear no uniform, no mark by which they may be distinguished from brigands ; men who are believed on their oaths before the court without previous inquiry into their lives, or morals, when they are installed in their functions, and have the fortune, the honour, and sometimes the life, of their fellows placed in their hands. Tell him that he would best consult his own true dignity by carrying these true statements to the foot of the throne, and by ordering the release of an

unfortunate man, who has been dragged to prison because the tax-gatherers found four pounds of salt in his house ! Go and tell him all this, Christophe, and I wish you joy of your mission ! You will be well received ! ”

“ In Heaven’s name,” said Maître Jean, “ what has happened to you ? ”

It was fully two minutes before he replied :

“ I went to Saverne, to complain of a general search made yesterday by the officials of the *Gabelle*, at eleven o’clock at night, in my parish, and of the arrest of Jacob Baumgarten, one of my parishioners. It was my duty ; I thought that a cardinal would understand that, and that he would have compassion on a wretched man, the father of six children, whose only crime was that he had bought a few pounds of contraband salt, and would order him to be released. First, I had to wait two hours at the door of his magnificent château, though the Capuchins went in and out as if it belonged to them. They were going to congratulate his Eminence on the dismissal of Neckar. At last, I was admitted to this Babylon, decked out in all the pomp and pride of silk, and gilding, and precious stones. They left me there, from eleven

o'clock in the morning till five in the evening, with two other poor curés from the mountain. Now and then we saw a great personage, dressed in red, who came to the door, looked at us, and called out to the others, 'The black-legs are still there!' I waited patiently, intending to complain to his Eminence, when one of the insolent servants (who had been grinning at us all day) came to tell us that his Eminence would grant no more audiences until that day week. The rascal laughed in our faces."

As he said this, M. Christophe, whose face wore a terrible expression, snapped his great ash stick in two, as if it had been a twig.

"He deserved to be caned," said Maître Jean.

"If we had been alone, I would have taken him by the ears, and made him laugh on the other side of his face. But, there, I have offered my humiliation to the Lord."

Then he began to walk about the room afresh. We were all sorry for him. Dame Catherine brought him bread and wine. He ate and drank standing, and his anger suddenly cooled down. But he said things which I shall never forget. He said :

“Justice is trodden under-foot everywhere. The people do everything, the others do nothing but treat them with insolence, and tread every virtue under-foot. They despise religion. The son of the poor man fights their battles, the son of the poor man earns their bread. Again, it is the son of the poor man who, like myself, inculcates respect for their wealth, their dignities, aye, even their scandals. How long *can* this last? I do not know, but I know it *cannot* go on for ever; it is contrary to nature, contrary to the will of God. It is against one's conscience to preach respect for that which is shameful. It must come to an end, for it is written, ‘They who keep my commandments shall enter into my dwelling, but without are the shameless, the idolatrous, and every one who loveth and maketh a lie!’”

That same evening, M. Christophe returned to his village. We were all very sad, and before we separated, Maître Jean said to us:

“These nobles think of nothing; they know nothing but themselves. When they are forced to make use of one of us, whether as a soldier, or as a priest, it humiliates them,

and they get rid of him as soon as possible. They are wrong. And now that every one knows about the deficit, all these things will change. It is known that the money comes from the people, and the people will grow tired of toiling for princes and cardinals of that pattern."

I got home a little after ten that night, and all these thoughts pursued me even in my sleep. I had the same ideas as Maître Jean, Chanod, and M. Christophe, but the time was not yet come. We still had a great deal to suffer before the day of our deliverance dawned.

When I recal these stories of Neckar, of the Queen, and of the Comte d'Artois, I am reminded of the poverty of my parents at this time. They toiled incessantly, but want was never banished from our hovel, especially in winter.

Stephen had grown up, and worked with our father, but the poor feeble, delicate boy could hardly earn his own wretched food. Claude was cowherd to the monks at Lixholm. Nicholas worked in the forest as a wood-cutter; he was a capital workman, but unfortunately he passed his Sundays drinking

and fighting in the tavern, and gave hardly anything to our poor mother. Lisbeth and our little sister Mathurine waited on the officers and the city ladies at Maître Jean's Tivoli, but this was only once a week, and on the other days they begged on the road. You must bear in mind that there were no factories then, our village girls were not employed to knit capes, pelerines, and comforters of fine wool, as they now are; or to plait the thousands of straw bonnets which go to Paris, to Germany, to Italy, to America. Many of the village children had not earned a *sou* when they were eighteen and twenty years old.

But the worst of all was that our debt was increasing. We now owed M. Robin nine double crowns, and he tapped at our window regularly every three months to tell my father that he must supply such and such a *corvée*. We lived in terror of this man. All our other sufferings seemed nothing in comparison with this misfortune. We did not know that between the farms-general, the taxes, and the tolls, we were forced to pay ten times their value for all the necessities of life; that for a slice of bread we paid the

price of a loaf, for a pound of salt the price of ten pounds, and so on, through all the rest, and that this was ruining us.

We did not know that in Switzerland, at twenty-five leagues distant from our villages, we might have lived better, and saved money, with the sum which we earned. The poor peasants have never understood the injustice and iniquity of the indirect taxation. They are angry if they are asked for twenty sous in hard money, at the end of the year, but, if they knew what they are made to pay day by day upon the necessities of life, what would their feelings be !

There is not much to complain of now, since the tolls have been suppressed, and three-fourths of the officials dismissed, but in the old times, it was a scene of pillage and misery !

How I longed to be able to relieve my poor parents, how I longed for the next year, when Maître Jean was to give me three livres a month, and they should go towards the debt. I thought of this day and night, and worked all the more diligently for the thought.

At last, after so much suffering, a bit of good fortune came our way. At the drawing for the militia Nicholas had a white ticket. At

that time only the black tickets were taken. What joy we were all in !

Instantly it occurred to my mother to sell Nicholas. His height was five feet six inches, he could go into a grenadier regiment, and thus be worth more than nine double crowns.

I shall remember that family picture as long as I live. My mother took Nicholas by the arm, and said to him :

“ We are going to sell you. Several married men have been drawn for the militia ; you will readily be taken as a substitute.”

Only married men were permitted to purchase substitutes, who had to serve a double time, twelve years instead of six. Nicholas knew that as well as our mother, but he replied :

“ As you please ! I am always satisfied.”

Our father would rather have kept him at home, and began to say that by working as a wood-cutter, and supplying the *corvées* in the winter, he would earn some money, and so pay the debts ; but our mother took him aside, and whispered :

“ Listen, Jean Pierre, if Nicholas stays here, he will marry, I know he is running after that little Jeannette Loris. They will marry

and have children, and that will be worse than all !”

Then our father said, with tears in his eyes :

“Are you willing to become a substitute ?

Do you wish to go away ?”

Nicholas waved his old three-cornered hat (it had red ribbon in it that day), and cried :

“Oh, yes ! I’ll go—I ought to pay the debt. I am the eldest, and it is my affair.”

He was a good fellow. Our mother put her arms round his neck and kissed him, and told him that she knew he loved his parents, that she had always known it, and then that he should be a grenadier, and come back to the village with a white coat and blue facings, and with a plume in his hat.

“All right ! all right !” said Nicholas.

He saw through the cunning of our mother, who thought only of her brood, but he pretended to see none of it, and besides, he liked the idea of fighting.

Our father sat beside the hearth with his head in his hands, crying. He would have liked to keep us all with him, but our mother leaned over his shoulder, and while our brothers and sisters were shouting to the neighbours in the open doorway, she whispered to him :

“Listen! We shall get more than nine double crowns—*inches* pay separately—and Nicholas is six inches over five feet high, that will be twelve louis. We will buy a cow, and have milk, butter, and cheese, and we can also fatten a pig.”

He made her no answer, and all that day he was silent and sad.

However, the next morning they went into the town together; and notwithstanding his grief, our father told us when he returned, that Nicholas was to replace the son of Josse, the baker, that he would have to serve twelve years, and that we should have twelve louis,—one louis for each year of service!—that Robin should be paid off in the first instance, and that then we should see! He wished to leave a louis or two at Nicholas’ own disposal, but our mother insisted that he would not require anything, that he would have two good meals a day, and be comfortably clothed; that he would even have stockings in his shoes, like the militia, and that, if he were given money, he would only spend it at the tavern, and get himself into trouble.

Nicholas laughed, and said, as usual:

“Very well! All right! I am quite satisfied.”

Our father was wretched about it, and you must not think our poor mother was glad that Nicholas should leave us, no, she loved him very much, but great poverty hardens one's heart, and she was thinking of the two little ones, Stephen and Mathurine, and in those days twelve louis were a fortune.

Everything was arranged ; and the paper was to be signed in the presence of the mayor within a week. Every morning, Nicholas went to the town, and, as he was to replace his son, it was only natural that old Josse who kept the Stag inn, opposite to the German gate, should give him some sausages and bread, and should not refuse him a good glass of wine. The result was, that Nicholas passed all his time laughing and singing with his companions, who were also all substitutes.

As for me, I worked harder than ever, and with better heart, now that M. Robin was to be paid, and that we were to be rid of the rascal for good and all. I hammered away all day long at the anvil, as happy as a king, and Maitre Jean, Valentine, every one in the house, understood my joy.

One day, when the hammers were clanging, and the sparks were flying right and left,

a big fellow, six feet high, a corporal in the Royal German regiment, suddenly appeared at the door of the forge. His heavy fur cap was hanging over his ear ; his blue coat was buttoned over his chamois vest ; his breeches were bright yellow ; his boots reached his knees ; and he had a heavy sword in his belt. He called out :

“ Good day, cousin Jean ; good day ! ” and he looked as proud as a colonel. Maître Jean looked at him, at first, in some surprise, but soon replied :

“ Ha, it’s you, you rascal, is it ! You are not hanged yet ? ”

The other laughed.

“ You are just the same as ever, cousin Jean, always fond of your jokes ! Are you not going to treat me to a bottle of Rikewir ? ”

“ I don’t work to wet the whistle of lads of your kind, ” said Maître Jean, turning his back upon him. “ Come boys, to work ! ”

And as we began to hammer again, the corporal lounged away laughing.

He really was Maître Jean’s cousin ; he was the son of Jerome, of Quartre Vents, but he had done so many discreditable things in the country before he enlisted, that the family no longer recognised him.

This fellow had six months' leave, and you shall hear why I tell you anything about him.

The next day, as I went to buy our salt, I heard some one calling me at the corner of the market place.

"Michel ! Michel !"

I turned and saw Nicholas with this rascal, standing before the Boar Tavern. Nicholas took me by the arm and said :

"Come along, and have a drink."

"Let us go to Josse's," said I.

"No, no, I have had enough of sauerkraut. Come along."

I remonstrated on account of the cost, but the other said :

"Never mind that—that's my affair." We went in, and called for something to drink.

Old Ursula brought all we wanted ; wine, brandy, and cheese. But I had no time to lose, and I took no pleasure in remaining in the dirty hole, full of soldiers and militiamen, shouting, drinking, and smoking. Little Jean Rat, the clarionet player, who belonged, like myself, to Baraques, was with us, and he also drank at the expense of the corporal. Two or three old soldiers, real veterans—with their

pigtails tied behind their necks, their great hats awry, their noses and cheeks covered with red spots—were sitting round the table, their elbows spread out, and the stems of their black pipes between their teeth. They were disgustingly dirty, ragged, and drunken. They spoke to Nicholas familiarly, and he answered in the same tone. Two or three times I saw them wink at the corporal, and whenever Nicholas spoke they laughed and shouted :

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! That’s right. That’s it. Ha ! ha ! ha ! ”

I did not know what all this meant. I was quite amazed, especially as the other went on paying for everything.

The corporal asked me how old I was. I told him fourteen years old, and after that he said no more to me. Nicholas began to sing ; but as I found the stuffy place becoming more and more crowded, and that I could not breathe in it, I took up my bag, and hastened back to Baraques.

This took place on the evening before the day which was fixed for the signature of the papers before the Mayor. That night Nicholas did not come home to sleep. My father

was very uneasy, especially when I told him what I had seen. My mother said :

“Never mind. It is nothing. Boys must have some amusement. Nicholas is only taking advantage of a good opportunity of having a little pleasure, and it is costing him nothing.”

But, my father was none the less uneasy. My mother climbed up the ladder to her garret, and left him with me by the hearth. He did not speak for a long time, but at length he said :

“Let us go to bed, Michel ; let us try to sleep. To-morrow I will go early in the morning, and get this affair finished. We must sign, since we have promised.”

He went away up the ladder, and I was taking off my clothes, when we heard some one coming down the little street towards our cottage. Then my father returned and said :

“It is Nicholas !”

He opened the door, but instead of my brother we saw Jean Rat, whose face was very pale. He came in and said :

“Listen ; you must not be alarmed, but I have to tell you that something unfortunate has happened.”

"What is it?" asked my father, trembling.

"Your Nicholas is in the lock-up; he has nearly killed Jerome, of the Royal Germans, with a wine flagon. I said to him: 'Take care; do as I do. For the last three years I have been drinking at the expense of the crimps; they have tried to catch me many a time, but I don't sign; I let them pay, but I never sign.'"

"Oh, my God! my God!" cried my father, "is every misfortune to fall upon us?"

I felt that I could not stand; I crouched down in a corner of the hearth. My mother arose; everyone awoke.

"What has he signed?" asked my father, "tell us what it is! But he could not sign anything; he is promised to Josse, he has not power to sign."

"Well, well, it cannot be helped," said Jean Rat; "we had all drunk too much. The crimps were persuading him to sign, and I was winking at him not to do so; but he did not see me, he was too far gone to understand anything. I went out for a minute, and when I came back, they had induced him to enlist; he had just signed, and the Royal German was putting the paper into his pocket

and laughing. Then I dragged Nicholas into the kitchen, and said to him: 'You have signed?' 'Yes.' 'But you will not have your twelve louis, you will have only one hundred livres, you are tricked.' He went back furious, and insisted on the paper being torn up. The other laughed at him! What could *I* do? Your Nicholas knocked everything about; he seized the Royal German by the collar with one hand, and one of the old soldiers with the other, and shook them so that the house shook, and then he knocked them down. The old woman called out for the guard, and I, between the table and the wall, could do nothing. Jerome drew his sword, and then Nicholas took up the wine flagon and struck him such a blow, that the flagon was broken in a thousand pieces, and the Royal German fell headlong down beside the stove, which was overturned in the middle of a mass of bottles, jars, and jugs, which were all tumbled on the floor. The guard came up, and I had just time to step out by the stable, behind, into Synagogue Street. As I came round the corner, I saw Nicholas taken away by the guard. The street was full of people, I could not get near him. The people

said the Royal German was half killed. But he had drawn his sword ; Nicholas could not allow himself to be killed without resistance. Jerome is the cause of it all ; I am ready to swear to that, if they call me ; he is the cause of it all !”

While Jean Rat was telling us this terrible story, we were quite silent and overwhelmed ; we said nothing, we could say nothing, but when our mother lifted up her hands we all burst into tears. Our misfortunes were at their height. Not only were we ruined, but Nicholas was in prison. If the gates of the town had not been shut, my father would have gone thither at once, but we were obliged to wait in all our misery until the morning.

The neighbours, who were all in their beds, arose one after the other, hearing our cries, and as they came in Jean Rat told each all that had happened, while we, huddled together on our old box full of leaves, cried silently. Ah ! rich people do not know what misfortune means. No, no, the burthen of life is laid upon the poor, everything is against them.

At first our mother was angry with

Nicholas, but only for a few minutes ; then at last she pitied him and wept for him.

At daybreak, my father took his stick, and wanted to set off alone to the town, but I persuaded him to wait until we had spoken to Maître Jean. I felt sure he would give us good advice, and perhaps go with us to arrange this matter. We waited then, and at five o'clock we went down to the inn.

Maître Jean was already in, and standing in the eating-room in his shirt sleeves. He was astonished to see us, and when I told him the great misfortune which had befallen us, and begged him to assist us, he was, at first, violently angry.

"What do you suppose *I* can do ?" said he. "Your Nicholas is a scamp, and the other, my rascally cousin, is something worse. What is there to be arranged ? Things must just take their course ; it is an affair for the provost. Under any circumstances the best thing that could happen to you would be that the good-for-nothing fellow should be packed off to his regiment, since he has let himself be caught so foolishly."

He was quite right ; but seeing that the tears were streaming down my father's worn

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cheeks, he put on his Sunday coat, took up his big walking-stick, and said :

“ Well, well, Jean Pierre, you are such a good fellow that I must help you, if it is possible. But I have not much hope.”

He told his wife we should be back at nine o'clock, and gave some orders to Valentine. Then we set out in silence, and with bent heads. From time to time Maître Jean spoke :

“ What is to be done ? He has made his mark before witnesses ; he is six feet high, strongly built, just the man they want. It is not likely they will let off such a fool when he has allowed himself to be caught. Fools make the best soldiers, the less brains they have, the more hardihood. And as for that rogue, my cousin, what did they give him six months leave for, but that he might crimp the boys in our villages ? I do not see that there is anything to be done.”

The more he said, the more sorrowful we grew. But, when we were near the town, Maître Jean took courage, and said :

“ Let us go to the hospital first. I know the old controller, Jacques Pelletier, he will give us leave to see my cousin, and if he will

give up the enlistment papers, all will be right. Let me try what I can do."

We went along the ramparts to the old hospital, between the bastion of the gate of France and that of the Poudrière. Maître Jean pulled the bell at the door, where a sentinel was posted. An infirmarian appeared, and my godfather went in, bidding us wait.

The sentinel was pacing up and down. My father and I leaned against the garden wall and looked sadly at the old windows.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, Maître Jean returned to the door, and bade us come in. The sentinel allowed us to pass, and we entered the corridor, and went up the staircase, which reached to the roof. An infirmarian went on before us, and when we had gone some way up, he opened the door of a small room, in which we found Jerome, in a little bed, his head so bandaged up, that if it had not been for his nose and his moustaches I should not have known him again.

He raised himself upon his elbow, and looked out from under his cotton nightcap, with his head thrown back.

"Good morning, Jerome," said Maître Jean,

"I heard of your accident this morning, and I was very sorry for it."

Jerome made no answer; he did not look by any means so gay and so self-important as he had looked a day or two before.

"It was very unfortunate," continued my godfather. "You might have had your skull split. But the major tells me it will not signify, only you must not drink either wine or brandy for a fortnight, and then you will do well."

Jerome made him no answer, but after a while he looked at my father and me, and said :

"You have something to ask me. What is it?"

"Look here, cousin," said Maître Jean, "I am very glad to find you are not so bad as I heard you were. These poor people come from Baraques; they are the father and brother of Nicholas Bastien——"

"Ha! ha!" said the rascal, laying himself down again, "I understand you now. They have come to induce me to give up that fellow's enlistment papers, but I would let my head be cut off sooner. The ruffian! He wanted to strangle me, did he? The black-

guard ! I hope he may be in my company, I will take it out of him !”

He ground his teeth, and turned round, drawing the sheet over him, so that he should not see us.

“Can’t you just listen to me, Jerome ?” said Maître Jean.

“Go to the devil !”

Then Maître Jean grew angry, and said :

“You will not give up the enlistment paper ?”

“Go be hanged !”

The infirmarian now said we had better go away. But before we did so, Maître Jean said :

“I always thought you a bad fellow, and when you sold your father’s waggon and his oxen before you enlisted, I regarded you as the lowest of miscreants, but now I wish you were able to stand, that I might give you two sound boxes on the ear, for you are not worth more.”

He would have said more, but the infirmarian pushed him out, and shut the door. We went down stairs sick at heart ; all hope was gone.

When we were out of the hospital, Maître Jean said to me :

"There, you see, it was just time and trouble thrown away. Nicholas will have to remain in the lock-up until he gets the route. He will have to pay the expenses and the breakage at the tavern, and you will get nothing out of the bounty."

Then, all of a sudden, he began to laugh until the tears ran out of his eyes.

"Never mind, he has mauled my worthy cousin prettily ! What a fist the fellow must have !"

He laughed, until at last he made us laugh too. My father said,

"Yes, he is a fine strong fellow, our Nicholas. Jerome is a bigger man, with bigger bones ; but Nicholas has the sinews !"

We laughed then, but our sadness increased when Maître Jean left us, and went his way back to the forge.

That same day, we went to see Nicholas in the lock-up. He was sitting upon a bundle of straw. When he saw our father crying, he said,

"Never mind, father. Of course it is a misfortune, and I know there will be no

money coming to you. But, when we can do nothing to help ourselves, and change things, there is nothing for it but to make up our minds, and put a good face on it."

We saw that he was suffering severely, for all his light words and careless manner. When we bade him good bye, he kissed us. He was pale, and he asked to see our brothers and sisters ; but our mother would not consent.

Three days afterwards Nicholas set out to join his regiment, the Royal German. He was seated in a waggon, with five or six others, who had been fighting, and wasting their bounty money in debauchery. The waggon was guarded by mounted dragoons. I ran after it, and cried out, "Adieu, Nicholas, adieu !"

He lifted his hat. There were tears in his eyes, when he went away from his own village, without seeing father, or mother, or any one but me. Such is the way of the world. Our father was working as usual, as he had to work every day, that we all might live. Our mother was angry with him. After a while, indeed, she used to say, "Poor Nicholas, I ought to have forgiven him at

first, he was such a good boy!" That was all very well, but it did not do any good, for he was in the Royal German regiment, in garrison at Valenciennes, in Flanders, and a long time was destined to pass before any news of him reached us.

CHAPTER V.

THE folly of Nicholas would have kept us in wretchedness for years, if Maitre Jean had not taken compassion on us ; but, on the day of my brother's departure, he said to me, seeing me crying in my corner behind the stove,

“ Don't fret, Michel. I know that Robin the usurer has you in his claws, and that your parents may never be able to pay him, they are too poor ; but cheer up, for you shall pay him. Though you are not out of your apprenticeship, I will give you five livres a month. You are a good boy, you do your work well, and I am pleased with your conduct.”

He spoke very kindly. Dame Catherine's eyes filled with tears, so did Nicole's, and I could not speak for a minute. But then I answered him :

"Oh, Maître Jean ! you are doing for us more than a father would do !"

Chauvel, who had come in, with Marguerite, some time before, said :

"That's right, Maître Jean ! I always loved you, but now I esteem you."

Then he took my hand, and touching my shoulder, said,

"Michel, your father asked me to find a place for your Lisbeth. I have done so. They will take her at Toussaint's brewery at Vasselonne. She will have her board and lodging, a pair of shoes, and two double crowns a year. Later on, if she behaves well, they may do more for her ; but this is not a bad beginning."

My parents were overjoyed when I brought them this good news. Lisbeth did not know how to express her delight ; she would have set off that minute, only that we had to make a little collection for her in the village, because she had nothing but the old rags which she wore every day. Chauvel gave her sabots ; Nicole, a petticoat ; Dame Catherine, two nearly new chemises ; Létumier's daughter, a jacket ; and our parents, their blessing, and good advice.

Then she took leave of us all as quickly as possible, and went away by the Saverne road, across the gardens, stepping out bravely with her hardy long legs, and carrying her little bundle under her arm. We all stood at the door, and looked after her, but she never turned her head; when we lost sight of her at the top of the hill, she was gone for ever. The old people wept. This is the history of the poor. They bring up their little ones, and when they are fledged, they fly away, one by one, to seek their food. The old remain behind, to think of them.

From that moment our debt began to lessen. At the end of each month, my father and I went together to Mittelbronn, to old Robin's house. We went into the rat-hole, full of gold and silver, and there we always found the old rogue and his great wolf-dog, in a dirty little dark room with strongly-barred windows; his filthy otter-skin cap drawn down over his forehead, and his books before him. Apparently, he passed his life in making up accounts.

"What!" he would say. "Is it you? What are you in such a hurry about? I have not asked you for anything. On the

contrary, if you want a further advance, it is at your service. Do you want ten livres, fifteen livres? You have only to speak."

"No, no, M. Robin," I would answer. "Here is your interest, and here are four livres and ten sous to be taken off the debt. Mark four livres and ten sous to be deducted, on the back of the bill, if you please."

Then, seeing that I had good sense, and was tired of being fleeced, he would write the receipt grudgingly, grumbling,

"That's the thanks one gets for doing a service! That's the gratitude of folks!"

While he was writing I always leaned over his chair, and watched him, to make sure that the receipt was in form. "For the interest, so much! For the principal, so much!" Ah, I was wide awake, I had seen what it costs to owe money to such an old fox. My father, who could not read, and therefore did not require to look on, stayed outside the door, and when I joined him, the poor old man would say to me,

"Michel, you are saving us. You are the strong one of the family."

And when we were back again, in our poor

hovel, he would say to my brothers and sisters :

“ Michel is the master of us all ! He will take us out of poverty ! He knows something, but we know nothing ! We must always listen to him. Without him, we should be God-forgotten, wretched creatures.”

Unhappily, this was only too true. What can poor wretches do, who do not even know how to read ? What is to become of them in the grasp of a usurer like Robin ? They have just to submit to being eaten alive. It took more than a year to pay the nine double crowns, and redeem the note of hand. Towards the end, M. Robin said we gave him too much trouble with all this writing, and he would no longer receive such small sums. I replied that he could do as he pleased ; in that case we would deposit the money with the Provost, and then he gave in.

Finally, when I came home one day, with the note of hand in my pocket, my mother went almost crazy with joy. She wished she could have read the paper, she cried out :

“ It is done, it is over, it is really finished ! You are quite sure there is an end of it, Michel ? ”

"Yes, quite sure."

"We shall have no more corvées to supply for Robin?"

"No more, mother."

"Read it for us."

They all gathered about me, and leaned over me, with their mouths open, listening, and when I read at the end "paid," they began to dance. One would have taken them for savages. Our mother cried out :

"Ha, ha, the goat will not be grazing off our flesh for the future! What we have suffered! What corvées he has put upon us!"

Some time afterwards, M. Robin stopped at our door, to ask if we needed any more money, and she caught up a pitchfork, and ran at him furiously, screaming :

"Ha, are you come here again with your corvées?"

She would have exterminated him, if he had not run away as fast as he could to the other end of the village. But what is to be expected, even of honest quiet people, when they are pushed to such extremities? Usurers always come to a bad end. They forget that though people are sometimes brought very low, they rise again, and then it is their

turn to settle a bad account. I have seen five or six occasions in my life, when there were not enough gendarmes to defend these robbers. Let them think of that ! I give them good advice. I am writing my story for the benefit of the peasants, but others may profit by it, if they will.

While these things were coming to pass, other matters were going on as usual ; the fairs and markets were held, the taxes were paid, the people complained, the Capuchins begged, the soldiers were drilled, and the old custom of striking them with the flat blade of the sword was revived for their benefit. Every Friday, when I went into the town to buy our salt, I witnessed this abomination. Old soldiers beaten by young cadets ! It is many a long year since then ; but the remembrance makes me shudder. We were also very indignant because the foreign regiments in our pay—the Swiss from Schoenau, and others—were commanded in the German language. Was it not absurd, that soldiers, who were destined to fight against a common enemy, should be commanded in two different languages ? I well remember Martin Gros, an old soldier in our village, complaining of this blunder, and

telling me that it had done a great deal of harm during the war with Prussia. But our former kings and nobles had no wish to see the people and the soldiers of one mind. They wanted Swiss, Chamborans, Saxon, and Royal German regiments, &c., to keep down the French. They did not trust us, they treated us like prisoners who must be kept under guard.

By and bye, we shall see what those foreigners did against France which fed them ; we shall see their regiments go over in a body to the enemy !

But I must get on.

In the evenings we read the newspapers. Sometimes Chauvel was with us, and sometimes we were alone. Maître Jean had not been mistaken about the nobles, the princes, and the bishops : since M. Neckar had been dismissed, they troubled themselves no farther about the deficit. The newspapers were full of the royal and princely festivities, of hunts, and balls, of rejoicings, of pensions, and gratuities. Our fair Queen, Marie Antoinette, the Count d'Artois, the equerries, the gentlemen-in-waiting, the lords of the bedchamber, the mistresses of the robes, the clerks of the

pantry, and the kitchen, the crowds of sycophants and servants, who lived in luxury at our cost, laughed at the idea of bankruptcy. They had soon found ministers, Joly and Fleury, and others, to carry on the old game, in the old way, and these complacent gentlemen never talked about giving an account to the people.

When Maître Jean read these things now, he did not get into a rage. He looked grave, anxious, and asked ;

“What is the King’s Chamber ? the chapel-choir, the chapel-oratory, the wardrobe, the great stables, and the little stables, the hunting-stud, the wolf kennel, the privy-purse, the mastership of the hunt of Fontainbleau, Vincennes, of Royal Monceau, the falconry of the park of Boulogne, of Muette, and its dependencies, the bailiff’s office, and the royal commanders of the preserves of the Louvre ? What is the grand falconer of France ? Tell me, Chauvel, what does all this mean ? What has it to do with us ?

Chauvel answered him with a smile :

“It encourages trade, Maître Jean.”

“Trade !”

“Yes, of course. The best kind of trade is

that which takes money away from the peasants, and does not send it back again, is it not? Our ministers have told us, hundreds of times, that it is luxury which makes trade prosper, have they not? And, of course, we are bound to believe them! We work and pay, and the nobles amuse themselves, and spend the money. They have laces, and diamonds, and embroidery. The twelve footmen, the pages of the ante-chambers, the hair-dressers, and tiring women, the bath-room attendants; the laundresses of the Queen's body linen, the ladies-in-waiting and the gentlemen-in-waiting—all these are so good for trade, you know! They don't live on beans and lentils, they don't wear blue sacking blouses, as we do."

"No, no, Chauvel, you are right there," replied Maître Jean, angrily,—“not the turnspits, nor the inspectors of the ‘department of the Mouth’—whom I see set down here, nor the dentists to the Queen. Oh, can it be possible that thousands of human beings have to toil all their lives long to maintain such an atrocious system. Good God! can it be possible it is always to be so—let us read something else!”

But when he turned the page he came upon

something still worse. Here was a list of buildings and repairs, and decorations, of invitations to fêtes and dinners, of promenades in hats laced with gold, and silk robes, in short of a heap of ceremonies incomprehensible to us poor peasants. Our imagination could hardly stretch to conceiving the quantity of money they must have cost.

Chauvel explained, with affected astonishment :

“What could M. Neckar have been thinking about? Why we never had so much money; we have actually too much; we do not know what to do with it!”

He looked at us, his little eyes glittered with meaning, and their expression made our hearts glow with anger. It was a terrible thing to think that such quantities of money were being spent in such a way, to please the selfish vanity of a lot of wicked heartless men and women, while two-thirds and a half of France were suffering cold and hunger.

“All is going on admirably,” said Chauvel. “The taxes, the expenditure, and the deficit are increasing year by year. We are prospering—the more we run into debt, the richer we grow. That is plain.”

"Yes," said Maître Jean, "that is quite plain."

The more we read the newspapers, the more angry and miserable we became. It was evident that these nobles took us for fools, but what could we do? They had the troops and the militia on their side. We could only say to ourselves :

"How happy it is for them, those nobles, to be born into the world ! But for us, how miserable !"

The example set by the Queen, the Count d'Artois, and the rest, who passed their time in every kind of dissipation in Paris, spread even to the small towns. Nothing was thought of but *fêtes*, reviews, parades, galas, and so forth. The colonels, the majors, the captains, the lieutenants, and the cadets did nothing but strut about, and beat their soldiers, and even beat the peasants as they were returning at night to their villages.

Ask old Laurence Duchemin, and he will tell you what sort of life the officers of the Castella regiment led at the *Panier Fleuri*, how they drank champagne, and brought in the women and girls of the place, by way of dancing with them, and how, when the hus-

bands and fathers objected, they drove them home to Quatre Vents with their sticks.

You can understand that when we, the workmen and peasants of the neighbourhood, saw our women going off with these young men and walking about with them at Tivoli, among the people who thought so much of themselves, it made us wretched and uneasy. The women and the girls thought it an honour, and a fine thing.

We had no hope except in the deficit. All sensible men knew that it must go on increasing, especially after the Queen and M. d'Artois had contrived to have M. de Calonne made Comptroller-General of the finances. We underwent four years of misery and heart-burning with him, and his cunning devices for robbing us. We have had many bad ministers since this Calonne's time, but never a worse than he. His inventions and lies have descended to his successors, and even the most stupid among them has only to avail himself of Calonne's plans for deceiving the people, to seem clever. He pretended to see the bright side of everything, like other rascals who are always thinking of increasing their debts, but never of paying them ; their

confident air makes people trust them, and that is all they want.

But Calonne did not deceive us, for all that. Maître Jean could not open a newspaper without getting into a rage. He would say :

“ This rascal never does anything but tell lies. He flings our money out of window ; he robs Peter to pay Paul ; he borrows money right and left, and when, at last, it must be paid, he will make his escape to England and leave us in the lurch. Mark my words, this is what will happen.”

Every one saw what was coming, except the king, the queen, the princes, whose debts Calonne had paid, and the courtiers on whom pensions and pecuniary favours of all sorts were showered.

The clergy were not quite so blind. They began to perceive that all these fine tricks of Calonne's would turn out badly. Every time Chauvel returned from his tramp, his face was bright, his eyes were shining, and he would smile, as he and Marguerite took their places behind the stove.

“ Maître Jean,” said Chauvel one day, “ things are going on better and better, our

poor parish curés are all reading the *Vicaire Savoyard*, by Jean Jacques, the canons and beneficed clergy are all reading Voltaire. They are beginning to preach the love of our neighbours, and to deplore the poverty of the people. They are begging alms for the poor. All through Alsace and Lorraine one hears of their good works. In such a monastery, the superior is having the ponds drained, to give work to the peasants ; in such another the little tithe is to be forgiven to the people this year ; further on, they are distributing soup. Better late than never. These good impulses have come to them very suddenly. The clerical race is very cunning, and these fellows, seeing that the boat is going down, quietly and unperceived, are making friends for themselves, that there may be somebody to throw them a rope."

And here he winked his little eyes. We hardly dared to believe what he said, it seemed too much for belief ; but during the years 1784, 1785, and 1786, Chauvel grew gradually more gay, more companionable and pleasant. He was like one of those birds who, having strong sight, fly high, and see

very far off, and very distinctly, above the clouds.

Marguerite was growing pretty. She used to laugh as she passed the forge, and sometimes she would look in at the door, her basket of books on her back, and call out to us in her gay clear voice :

“ Good day, Maître Jean ! Good day, Valentine ! Good day, Michel ! ”

Then I always went out, to talk and laugh with her for a while. She was brown and sunburnt, the end of her petticoat and her heavy laced boots were covered with mud ; but her eyes were so bright and lively, her teeth were so white, and she had such a gay and courageous air, that, without knowing why, I was always glad to see her, and sometimes I looked after her as she was going up the hill to their house, thinking :

“ If I could carry her basket, and go about selling books with them, I should be quite content.”

But I went no further, and when Maître Jean called me I ran back immediately.

I was a journeyman blacksmith now ; I earned my ten livres a month, and could help my mother well. Lisbeth sent nothing ex-

cept an occasional message from Wasselonne, but my brother Claude, who received four livres a month as herdsman to the Tiercelins, gave three to his parents. Stephen and Mathurine made baskets and bird-cages, and sold them in the town. I loved these two very much, and they loved me, Stephen especially. He came to meet me every evening, jumping and dancing with delight, and he would take me by the hand and say :

“Come, Michel, and look at my day’s work.”

Sometimes it was very well done, but whether it was or not, our father would say :

“I never could plait like that. I never could have done it so well.”

I had occasionally thought of sending Stephen to M. Christophe, but unfortunately he was not able to go so long a distance every morning and evening. However, as he was very anxious to be taught, I gave him lessons in the evenings, when I returned from the forge, and thus he learned to read and write.

In short, not one of us was obliged to beg any longer. We were all living by our work, and our parents had time to breathe.

Every Sunday after vespers, I made my father come to the Three Pigeons, and drink half a pint of white wine, which did him good. My mother, whose greatest ambition was the possession of a goat, had one now, which I had bought from the old Jew Schmoule, a superb animal, with an udder almost down to the ground. She would take her goat out to browse along the road, while my father sat in the inn. It was her greatest happiness to take care of it, to milk it, and to make the cheese ; she prized it beyond everything. The two poor old people asked nothing more, and I was very happy.

After my work was done, and on Sundays and holidays, I had time to read. Maître Jean lent me good books, and I used to pass all the afternoons in studying them, instead of playing quoits with my companions.

In the year 1785 a great scandal spread all through France. 'It was when that wretched Cardinal de Rohan, whom M. Christophe despised, tried to seduce the Queen, Marie Antoinette, by giving her a diamond necklace. It came out that this man had quite lost his head, for he allowed himself to be deceived by an actress, who got off at first, with the

diamonds ; but she was caught afterwards, and branded on the shoulder by the public executioner.

As for the cardinal, he was not branded, because he was a prince. They gave him leave to retire to Strasbourg. I remember when this happened that Maître Jean said if Brother Benedict, or any other Capuchin, had tried to seduce *his* wife, he would have smashed his head with his forging hammer. I felt certain that I should have done the same thing. But, you see, the king was too good, and it was a shameful thing for the queen that the cardinal should have dared to believe she could be seduced by presents. It was talked of all over the country, and all respect for princes, nobles, and bishops, was lost. Honest people felt nothing but contempt for them all. The deficit began to be talked of again ; it was not with lies and court scandals it was to be paid.

Thus things dragged on to the end of 1786. On New Year's eve, Chauvel and his daughter arrived, all covered with snow. They were returning from Lorraine, and they told us, as they were passing the forge, that they had learned that the king had convoked the no-

tables to a meeting at Versailles, in order to investigate M. de Calonne's accounts, and endeavour to liquidate the debt.

Maitre Jean was delighted. He said ;

" We are saved ! Our good king is taking pity on his people ; he intends to make the taxes equal ! "

But Chauvel, who stood with his huge basket still on his shoulder, turned pale with anger, as he listened to him, and replied slowly :

" If our good king has convoked the notables, it is because he cannot help himself ; the debt has mounted up to sixteen hundred and thirty millions ! How can you be so simple as to believe that the princes of the blood, the chiefs of the nobility, the magistrature, and the clergy, are going to pay it out of their pockets ? No, no ; they are going to try and put it on *our* backs ! And this good Queen, this brave Count d'Artois, after having led the life we know all about now, after having trodden the people under their feet, and given every possible scandal ; these honest people have not enough courage to take the responsibility of their deeds, and so they have convoked the notables, in order to

get everything settled for them. But as for us, poor devils, who always have to pay, and never get any profit out of anything, *we* are not convoked, they do not want *our* advice ! What vile, what base dishonesty, and bad faith !”

Chauvel was in a state of violent anger. This was the first time I had seen him lose his composure. His little legs actually shook under him ; and Marguerite, in her wet clothes, and with her hair full of the melted snow clinging to her cheeks, stood by him, as though to support him. Maître Jean wished to answer, but they did not listen to him. Madame Catherine rose up angrily from her spinning-wheel, saying that our good king did all he could, and that there must be no want of respect for the queen, in the inn ; that she would not permit such a thing !

“ You are right, Dame Catherine,” said Valentine ; “ we must respect the representatives of God on earth ? You are quite right !”

He stretched out his long arms in admiration. Then Chauvel and Marguerite turned abruptly away, and not only came no more to the Three Pigeons, but turned away their

heads when they saw any of us ; which we all regretted very much. Maître Jean reproached Valentine :

“ Who gave you leave to meddle with my business ? ” he said. “ On account of you my best friend will not come into my house, or speak to me ; a man whom I respect, and who has more sense in his little finger than you have in all your big lumbering body. If you had said nothing, all would have been well, and in the end I should have come to understand that he was in the right.”

“ But I maintain that he was in the wrong,” answered Valentine. “ The notables desire the good of the people ! ”

Maître Jean turned very red, and looked askance at him, muttering :

“ You’re an ass ! If you were not such a good fellow, I should have turned you out to grass long ago.”

But he said nothing aloud, for Valentine was not a man to allow himself to be insulted, even by Maître Jean. He was very proud, notwithstanding his stupidity, and if he had heard what Maître Jean said, he would have packed up his things and gone off, that very day. So that in place of losing one friend, we

should thus have lost two. We had need to be careful.

Chauvel's absence became more grievous and irksome to us every day. The quarrel lasted until one morning, when Maître Jean, seeing the pedlar and his daughter passing the forge, ran after them, and called out :

"Chauvel ! Chauvel ! You are keeping it up to me, but I am not keeping it up to you !"

Then they shook hands, and a few days afterwards, when Marguerite and Chauvel had come back from Alsace, they once more took their places behind the stove, and not a word more was said about the little misunderstanding.

The notables were assembled at Versailles, and we were beginning to see that Chauvel had been right in maintaining that they would do nothing for the people ; for, after deliberating upon the speech of Calonne, who declared, "that the debt could not be paid by the ordinary means, that it would be necessary to abolish the institution of farms-general, to establish provincial assemblies who should assess their own taxes according to their means, and to levy contributions on all lands, without distinction," they negatived it all.

Chauvel smiled grimly, as he listened to this.

"Ah, the wicked men!" cried Maitre Jean.

But Chauvel said:

"What would you have? These people are all friends, they are not likely to tax themselves, or one another, to inflict any kind of injury on their own class. If they had been called together to impose a new tax upon the people, it would not have taken them long to consider. They would have said 'yes,' ten times as readily as once. But to tax one's own property, is hard, we must acknowledge."

Chauvel was infinitely amused by the description of the forms observed at the session of the notables. "After the King had pronounced his discourse, the most noble the Keeper of the Seals approached the throne, making three deep reverences, the first, before leaving his place, the second, when he had advanced a few steps, the third, when he had reached the first step of the throne. Then he received, on his knees, the commands of His Majesty."

"There," said Chauvel, "how beautiful all that is! Surely, after that, we must be saved?"

Finally, the King dismissed M. de Calonne,

and appointed Monseigneur de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, in his stead ; and then the nobles consented to the reforms, for some reason, which has never been ascertained. Immediately, the members of the parliament of Paris, who had never taken any part in the extravagance of the Court, who were judges, grave serious men living quietly and economically, protested against being made to pay for the follies of other people. They opposed the imposition of a land tax, declaring that such a burthen could be legally ordered only by the States General, which meant that every one, workmen, peasants, citizens, and nobles, should vote together the disposition of their money. The great word had been spoken ! This was a scandal worse even than that of the Queen and the Cardinal de Rohan, because, by their declaration the Parliament of Paris asserted that from the beginning the people had been illegally taxed, without their consent, and that such taxation was robbery.

This began the Great Revolution.

It was plain, then, that for ages the nobles and the clergy had deceived the people. The judges declared such to be the fact. They had lived at our cost, they had reduced us to

the most frightful poverty, that they might revel in luxury at our expense, their nobility did not mean anything ; they had no greater rights than we had ; they had no more heart or intellect than we had ; their greatness was only the result of our ignorance, and they had brought us all up in ideas contrary to good sense, expressly that they might fleece us easily, as well as mercilessly.

You may imagine the exultation with which Chauvel heard of this declaration by the parliament.

“ From this hour all will begin to change,” he cried : “ the day of great things is at hand. The end of the bondage of the people is *near*, justice is coming !”

CHAPTER VI.

THE declaration of the parliament of Paris flew like lightning through the provinces. In the villages, at the fairs and the markets, nothing was spoken of but the States General. If five or six peasants, walking along the same road, were talking for a few minutes about their own affairs, one of them would be sure to burst out with :

“ And the States General ! When are we to have our States General ? ”

Then each said his say about the abolition of the tolls, about the city taxes, the tithes, the nobility, and the Third Estate. They disputed, they turned into the first tavern to talk it out, even the women took up the matter. Instead of living on like fools, paying and paying, without ever knowing what was done with our money, each man waited to see

the accounts, and to vote his own taxes, himself. We were getting sense at last !

Unfortunately, that was a very bad year, on account of the drought. From the middle of June to the end of August not a drop of rain fell, so that there was a scarcity of corn and oats, and indeed of every kind of grain. The grass was not worth mowing. Even the potatoes were scarce, and famine stared us in the face. We were in dismay. Then came the winter of 1788, the worst winter within the memory of the men of my age.

A report was spread that some rascals had bought up all the corn in France, in order to starve us, and this was called *the pact of famine*. These rogues had laid hands on the grain, at harvest time, and shipped it off to England, whence they would re-ship it, when the famine should have set in, and sell it at any price they chose to name. Chauvel told us that this association of bandits had existed for a long time, and that King Louis XV. had been a member of it. We did not like to believe him, but I was convinced afterwards that he told us the truth.

The poor people of France never had so much to suffer as in the winter, from 1788 to

1789, not even at the time of 'the maximum,' or later, in 1817, 'the dear year.' Inspectors were sent round to all the barns, and the farmers were forced to thresh the grain, and send it at once into the markets.

If I had not had the good fortune to be earning twelve livres a month, and if Claude had not sent all he could spare, for the support of the poor old people, and the two children, who remained with them, God only knows what would have become of them. Thousands of people died of hunger ! You may guess what were the sufferings of Paris, a city which is entirely supplied from without, and which would perish, if it were not enormously profitable to bring meat and vegetables into its markets !

Still, notwithstanding it all, the people did not forget the States General. On the contrary, the want and misery increased the popular indignation. The people thought : " If our money had not been squandered, we should not have been so poor. But, beware, beware, this cannot last. We do not want any more ministers like Calonne and Brienne ; they were yours, in your interests, you nobles and priests. We want ministers for the people, like Turgot and Necker."

During the winter, in all the frightful cold, so intense that the wine and brandy were frozen in the cellars, Chauvel and his daughter never ceased to tramp about the country with their baskets. They had sheep-skins wrapped round their legs, and they travelled steadily, their great iron-shod sticks in their hands, through the ice and the sleet. They were then selling innumerable little books which came from Paris, and sometimes, when they returned from their tramp, they would bring some of them, and we would read them by the side of the great red-hot stove. I still have several of these little books, and, if I could lend them to you, you would be surprised to see how much thoughtful good sense existed before the Revolution. Everyone perceived the truth; everyone was sick of roguery, except the nobles, and the soldiers whom they had bought. One evening we read "Diogenes to the States General." On another evening, "Complaints, lamentations, remonstrances, and wishes of the Citizens of Paris;" or, "The causes of the scarcity revealed;" or, "Reflections upon the interests of the Third Estate, addressed to the people of the Provinces;" and other little books of a

similar kind, which shewed us that three-quarters and a-half of France thought as we did concerning the Court, the ministers, and the bishops.

Just at this time a circumstance occurred, which caused me great annoyance, and which shews how totally different natures may exist in the same family.

About the middle of December, during the great snow, old mother Houard, who went of all the errands for the town and the village, came to tell us that the postmaster had just cried the letters which were not called for on the Market Place, and that there was one for Jean Pierre Bastien, of Baraques, Bois de Chênes. Branstein, the letter carrier, did not carry the letters then, from village to village. The postmaster, M. Perrinet, used to bring them out on the Market Place, in a basket, and go about from bench to bench, asking the people :

"You come from Lutzelbourg, don't you ? Are you not from Hultenhausen, or Harberg ?"

"Yes."

"Well then, you will give this letter to Jean Pierre, or Jean Claude So-and-so. It has been here these six weeks, and no one has come for it."

The person addressed took the letter, and the postmaster troubled himself no further about it, he had done his part.

Old Houard would gladly have brought us our letter, but there were twenty-four sous to pay for it, and the good woman did not possess them; and then she was not sure that we would be willing to redeem the letter. It was rather hard to give twenty-four sous for a letter, in such times. I was greatly inclined to let it lie in the post office, but my father and mother were in great trouble about it, thinking the letter came from Nicholas. The poor old creatures told me they would rather go without their dinner for a fortnight than without news from their boy.

I went to the town, and brought back the letter. It was from my brother Nicholas; and I read it aloud in our cottage, amid the rejoicing and emotion of us all. It was written on the 1st of December, 1788. Brienne had been dismissed with a pension of 800,000 louis; the States General had been convoked for the 1st of May, 1789; Neckar had returned to his post; but Nicholas cared for none of those things! I will copy the old, torn, yellow scroll, that you may see what the

soldiers were thinking of, when all the rest of France was calling for justice.

Our poor Nicholas was neither better nor worse than his comrades ; he had no education ; he reasoned like a fool, because he had never learned to read ; but we had no right to reproach him for that ; and perhaps his friend whom he had employed to write his letter, may have added a good deal on his own account, to make a flourish.

This is the letter :

“ In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost :

“ To Jean Pierre Bastien, and his wife ; Nicholas Bastien, Brigadier in the 3rd Squadron of the Royal German Regiment, in Garrison at Paris.

“ My dear father and mother, brothers and sisters,

“ You must be alive still, for it would not be natural that you should all die in four years and six months, while I am perfectly well. I am not quite as fat as Borutz, the syndic of the butchers, at Phalsbourg ; but without flattering myself, I think I may say I am as strong as he is. My appetite never fails me, and I sleep well, which is the chief thing.

“ Dear father and mother, if you could see me on horseback, with my hat cocked, my feet in the stirrups, and my sword drawn, making the military salute ; or if you could see me walking about the town, with a fair friend upon my arm, you would not believe your eyes. And, if I were to pass myself off as belonging to the nobility, as a great many of our fellows do, I might easily do so ; but you will readily believe that I am not capable of doing such a thing, out of consideration for your grey hairs, and the respect which I bear you.

“ You must know that the first year, Jerome Leroux, the quarter-master, did me all the harm he could, because of the mark I set on his face, with the wine flagon. But now I am brigadier in the third squadron, and I have nothing to do with him, beyond saluting him. I shall be a quarter-master one of these days, and will have it out between us, for I do not want to conceal from you that I am regimental fencing-master ; and that, in my first year, I wounded two provosts from Noailles.

“ But now, except Lafougère, de Lauzun, and Bouquet, the campmaster-general, not

one of them would dare to look crooked at me. That comes of the eye and the wrist, one has them, or one has not, it is a gift from the Lord, and they even come from other regiments to defy me, out of jealousy. On the first of July last, before quitting Valenciennes, the regimental staff betted on me, against some of the Conti regiments (infantry). The fencing master, a dark little fellow from the south, kept on saying, 'Ho, the Alsatian indeed!' That vexed me. So I sent two provosts to challenge him on my behalf. It was all understood beforehand, and the next morning we met in the park. He jumped about like a cat, but at the third pass, I caught him very neatly under the left breast. He did not even squeak, it was all over. They clapped me into a cell for forty-eight hours, but the major, Chevalier de Mendell, sent me a basket of good meat and wine from his own table. Nicholas Bastien had won the bets on the Royal German, mind you, and they could afford to give him a treat. Since then, I have the esteem of my superiors. And if you know what is going on here, how those rascally citizens, especially the lawyers, are making a stir, you will understand that

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there is plenty of opportunity to distinguish one's self. No later than the 20th of last August, the commandant of the watch, Dubois, made us charge the rabble on the Port Neuf, and all the day until midnight we rode them down, in the Place Dauphine, the Place de Grève, and everywhere. If you had seen, the next day, what a massacre we had made of them you would have said that's right. I was the first on the right of the squadron, second line, and every one that came in my way was done for. After the charge, our lieutenant-colonel de Reinach said he thought the lawyers would keep quiet for the future. I think so too; they have had about enough of it. This shows the beauty of discipline. You just get the word of command, and away you go; if your father and mother, and brothers and sisters, are in your way, you pass over them as you would over a dust heap. I should have been a quartermaster already, only that one must know how to write, to make one's reports. But make your minds easy, I have my account to settle with Jerome Leroux. A young man of good family, Gilbert Gerald, is teaching me my letters, and I am giving him lessons in

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fencing. We shall both get on, I promise you. You shall soon see my own writing, and now I embrace you all, and wishing you all you can desire in this world, and the next, I make my mark,

“NICHOLAS BASTIEN,

“Fencing master of the Royal
German Regiment.

“1st December, 1788.”

Poor Nicholas thought fighting the finest thing in the world, the noble officers looked upon him as a kind of bull-dog to be set on to fight another bull-dog, and he gloried in that. I forgave him easily enough, but I was ashamed to show his letter to Maître Jean and to Chauvel. All the time I was reading it, my father and mother were lifting up their hands in admiration; my mother was laughing and crying both together.

“Ah!” she said, “I knew Nicholas would make his way in the world. Just see how he is getting on! It is because we stay at Baraques that we are always poor. But Nicholas will be a noble yet, I foretell it, he will be noble.”

My father was proud and happy also, but he was alive to the danger of fighting, and said :

"Yes, yes, that's all very well, but suppose some one should hit Nicholas just under the left breast; that would break our hearts. This is a terrible thing—the other may have had a father and mother; how do we know?"

"Oh, nonsense!" said my mother.

And then she took the letter, and set off to show it to our neighbours.

"A letter from Nicholas. He is fencing master in his regiment. He has killed several already; no one must look crooked at him," and so on.

Three days afterwards she gave me back the letter, and as Maître Jean had asked me for it, I had no choice but to read it out for him in the evening. Chauvel and Marguerite were there, and I did not dare to look at them. Maître Jean spoke his mind freely.

"What a misfortune it is to have fellows like that in one's family," he said, "who think nothing of father and mother, brothers and sisters, and who think that very fine, because it is called discipline."

Chauvel answered:

"Never mind, Maître Jean. It is well that we should learn what Nicholas tells us

there. We knew nothing of these charges in the streets, these massacres of the people. The papers said nothing about them, though I did hear in my journeyings that masses of troops had been marching from Grenoble, from Toulouse, and from Bordeaux. This is all a good sign, it all proves that the current is drawing everything with it. We owe the dismissal of Brienne, and the convocation of the States General, to these battles. We need not be afraid of battles; what are fifty or a hundred regiments against a whole people? Provided the people wills firmly what it does will, provided there is perfect union in the third estate, all the rest is only like the foam which is blown away when a strong wind rises. But I am glad to know all this. Let us prepare for the elections, and let us all show justice and good sense."

After that Chauvel did not go about with his lips close shut, as before, he smiled, and seemed full of confidence. And, notwithstanding the famine, which lasted until the end of March, the peasants, the artisans, and the citizens, made common cause together. Chauvel was in the right when he said, speaking of the declaration of the parliament

of Paris, that the time of great things was drawing near. Every one felt more strength and confidence, as if a new life had begun, and the poorest among us, those who lacked food and clothing, instead of being bent towards the ground as they used to be, lifted up their heads, and looked at the face of the heavens.

CHAPTER VII.

THE famine increased in severity, but the courage of the poor people also grew. The peasants from Hultenhausen, Baraques, and Quatre-Vents, looked like skeletons ; they dug up roots from under the snow ; they boiled the weeds which grew among the old ruins ; they resorted to every possible means of keeping life in them. The suffering of the time was frightful, but the spring was coming.

The Capuchins from Phalsbourg were afraid to beg now. They would have been attacked on the road if they had attempted to do so, for the regiment of La Fère, which had relieved the Castella regiment, was composed of old soldiers, who were tired of the young nobility and their blows, and who would not lend the monks any assistance.

And then we felt that something was about to happen. The bailiffs and seneschals had been obliged to publish the king's edict for the convocation of the States General. We knew that they were to receive the letters of convocation on a certain day, that they were then to announce them to all assembled, and afterwards to have them affixed to the doors of the churches and the court houses. We knew that the curés were to read them to their congregations, and that a week at the latest after their publication, the citizens, artisans, and peasants, were to meet at the town hall for the purpose of drawing up a statement of our complaints and grievances, and also of nominating deputies by whom this statement should be presented at a certain place, not yet made known to us.

This was all that we had been told. We had plenty of complaints to enter on the statement in every parish, God knows.

We also learned that, a second session of notables was going on at Versailles, and that they were deliberating upon the last measures to be taken, before the assembling of the States General. In this time of famine, in the terrible months of December, 1788,

and January, 1789, nothing was talked of but the third estate, and every one knew that the third estate (*tiers état*) meant the citizens, the merchants, the artisans, the peasants, and the poor. In former times, our poor forefathers had also been consulted, but they had been obliged to kneel with ropes round their necks before the king, the nobles, and the bishops, when they went up to present their petitions. We learned, with intense indignation, that the parliament wished our representatives to do the same, which they called observing the forms of 1614.

Then the parliament were roundly abused, for we found out that though they had been the first to call for the States General, it was not that the people might be relieved, and have justice done to them, but in order that they might escape a share of the land taxes which the poor had borne so long.

The newspapers told us that corn had arrived from America and Prussia, but, far from giving us any of it at Baraques, and in the mountains, inspectors came and searched our houses, even under the thatch, in order to take from us the little that remained. The people in the large towns were in revolt, it was necessary

to pacify them, so they pillaged the poor country people, who endured such treatment patiently.

One memorable day, near the end of February, when the famine was at its height, the mayor, the aldermen, and the syndics of the town, who were inspecting the barns and haggarts in the neighbourhood, came to dine at Maitre Jean's inn. Chauvel, who always brought us the latest news from Alsace and Lorraine, had just returned from a long tramp, and, not knowing what was going forward, had come into the public room, and set his basket down on one of the benches. The next minute in came a crowd of gentlemen in powdered wigs, three-cornered hats, square cut coats, woollen stockings, muffs, and gloves furred up the elbows; and behind them, the provost's lieutenant, Desjardins, a tall, thin, yellow man, with a laced hat, and a sword. Chauvel looked a little uneasy. Desjardins threw a sinister look at him, over his shoulder. He had a bad face, and he it was to have prisoners put to the torture. While the others were getting rid of their accoutrements, and swarming into the kitchen, he unbuckled his sword, put it in a corner, and quietly lifted up the cover of

Chauvel's basket, and looked at the books. Chauvel stood behind, with his hands in his trousers pockets, under his blouse, with an air of utter indifference.

The kitchen door was open, and the blaze of the fire shone into the eating room. The syndic of the bakers, Nicole, was lifting up the covers of the stewpans, and Dame Catherine was explaining their contents. Nicole was spreading a fine white cloth upon the table, but the lieutenant of police did not stir from his place. One by one, he took the books out of the basket, and piled them upon the bench beside him.

"Is it you who sell these books?" he asked, without even turning his head.

"Yes, sir, at your service," replied Chauvel, quietly.

"Do you know," said the lieutenant, with cold contempt, "that all this leads to the gallows?"

"Oh, to the gallows!" said Chauvel, "such good little books as these! Look at them, sir—*Questions for debate at the assembly of wardens, by Monseigneur le Duc d'Orleans. Reflections of a patriot upon the approaching assembly of the States General. Grievances,*

desires, and propositions of job masters, with an entreaty that they may be entered upon the public list of petitions. There is nothing dangerous in all that?"

"And the King's permission?" asked the lieutenant, drily.

"Permission. You know, sir, since Monseigneur de Brienne's time, pamphlets pass without any permission?"

The lieutenant went on emptying the basket, and the others collected around him and Chauvel.

Maitre Jean and I, over against the press, were not easy in our minds. Chauvel looked at us, as if to give us courage, but we felt certain that there was something hidden in his basket, and that the lieutenant's sharp nose had scented it out.

Fortunately, when the books were nearly all on the bench, Dame Catherine came in in high delight, carrying the soup tureen, and Nicole, the syndic, with his wig awry, came in after her :

"Come, come," he cried, "let us sit down, here's the soup! Capital soup! What are you all looking at? Mercy on us, another search! I thought we had had enough of that

sort of work for to-day. Come along, if you don't sit down, I shall begin by myself."

He placed himself at the table, tucked a napkin under his chin, and took the cover off the soup tureen, whence a delicious odour diffused itself over the room. The aldermen and the syndics hurried to the table, and the lieutenant, seeing that the company had no notion of waiting for him, said to Chauvel, in an ill-humoured tone ;

"Remember ! What is put off, is not abandoned."

Then he threw down the book in his hand, and took his place at the table.

Chauvel replaced his pamphlets in the basket, hoisted it on his shoulder, and went out, with a look of relief at us. We breathed again ; for, notwithstanding all the fine promises that were being made to us, to hear the provost's lieutenant mention the gallows, had a suffocating effect.

However, Chauvel had got off, safe and sound, and these gentlemen dined as nobles and rich people dined before the Revolution. They had their own wine brought from the town, fresh meat, and white bread.

Outside the door, dozens of beggars were

looking at the windows, muttering prayers, and imploring charity ; some of them, women, with children in their arms, uttered groans which made me shudder. But these city gentlemen gave no heed to them,—they laughed, and talked, and ate and drank. At three o'clock they all went away, some in carriages, others on horseback ; to continue their search for grain, among the poor huts in the mountains.

That same evening Chauvel came to see us. Marguerite was with him. The moment he appeared, Maitre Jean cried :

“ Ah, what a fright you gave us ! What a dreadful life you lead, Chauvel ! I don't call it living, it is only rushing under the ladder ! I could not exist on the edge of the shadow of the gallows, a fortnight in such terror.”

“ Nor I,” said Dame Catherine.

“ Bah ! that is nothing,” said he, seating himself, “ nothing more than a joke.” Ten or fifteen years ago, you might have talked ! Then indeed I was hunted, then I dared not have been found with Kehl and Amsterdam editions in my pack ; for I should have made just one step from Baraques to the galleys, and a few years ago before that again,

I should have been hanged at once, out of hand. Yes, it was dangerous work, but, even if they did arrest me now, they could not keep me long in prison, and they could not break my legs and arms, to make me denounce my accomplices."

"That is all very fine, Chauvel," said Maître Jean, "but you were not comfortable. You *had* something in your basket."

"Of course I had; and here it is," said he, throwing a parcel of newspapers on the table. "Let us see how things stand with us now."

We secured the door and windows, and then we read until nearly midnight. I have copied some of those old papers, for I am sure it will give you pleasure to see how our hands were strengthened in that time of trouble, by men who had both heart and head in the cause.

The nobility and the provincial parliaments were unanimous in opposing the States General. In Franche Comté the people had turned out their parliament, because it had opposed the edict of the king, and declared that lands belonging to the nobles were virtually exempt from taxation, that they had been so for a thousand years, and should remain so to the

end of time. In Provence, the majority of the nobles and the parliament had protested against the edict of the king for the convocation of the States General. Then, the name of Mirabeau was heard for the first time, as that of a noble disowned by the others, and who joined the ranks of the third estate. He declared these protests of the nobles and the parliament to be "neither useful, becoming, nor legitimate." No man was ever heard to speak with such truth, grandeur, and correctness. He was not sufficiently "noble" for the others, and so they forbade him their assembly—a proof of their good sense.

Fighting was going on everywhere; at Rennes, in Brittany, the nobles were killing the citizens who supported the edict, and especially young men who were well known for their courage and resolution. The citizens were not sufficient in numbers, and they appealed for help to the other towns of the province, and received from the young men of Nantes and Angers the following reply, forwarded to them by forced marches :

"Shuddering with horror at the assassinations which have been committed at Rennes, —convoked by the general cry of anger and

of vengeance ; finding that the benevolent intention of our august king to set his people of the third estate free from their condition of slavery, is opposed by these selfish nobles, to whom the poverty and the tears of the people are but an odious tribute, which they desire to enforce on future generations ; we, full of confidence in our own strength, and resolved to break the last link of the chain which binds us, have determined to set out for the scene of these outrages in sufficient numbers to daunt the vile tools of the aristocrats. We protest beforehand against every proclamation which shall declare us to be seditious, when we are actuated by none but pure intentions ; we all swear in the name of our honour, and of our country, that, should an unjust tribunal lay hands upon us, we will do all that nature, courage, and despair, inspire man to do for his own preservation. Drawn up and signed at Nantes, in the Hôtel de la Bourse, 28th January, 1789."

This was the manifesto of the young tradesmen of the place.

The students and others, at Angers, also marched in the same direction ; and I will let you see what the women of that brave town wrote :

"It is resolved by the mothers, sisters, wives, and sweethearts, of the young citizens of Angers, assembled for the reading of the resolutions of the young men, and having read them,—that, if the troubles begin again, and that all classes of the citizens unite for the common cause, and depart in its support,—we will join ourselves to the nation, whose interests are our interests. But, as strength to fight is not ours, we take as our share of the common duty, and our special usefulness, care of the baggage, of provisions, the preparations for departure, and all the cares, consolations, and services within our power. We protest that we have no intention to depart from the respect and obedience which we owe to the king; but we will die rather than abandon our sons, our husbands, our brothers, and our lovers; preferring the glory of sharing their dangers to the security of a shameful inaction."

When we read this, we all wept and said :

"These are brave women, and honest men; we will do likewise!"

We felt that strength was in us. And Chauvel, lifting a warning finger, said :

"Let the nobles, the bishops, and the par-

liaments, try to understand facts, while it is yet time ! It is a great sign when even women are ready to stand up for the right, and when they sustain their brothers, their husbands, and their lovers, instead of endeavouring to dissuade them from the struggle. This has not often happened, but when it ever has taken place, the game was lost to the other side beforehand."

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME days later, 20th March, 1789, when the thaw had come, we heard that large placards, with the black stamp of the *fleur de lis*, had been posted up the night before, on the doors of the convents, the churches, and the public offices, summoning us all to the Town Hall of Phalsbourg. It was quite time! These placards called the nobility, the clergy, and third estate to the local assemblies, whereat our States General were to be prepared and composed.

I cannot do better than copy these placards. You will see by them what a difference there is between the present time and the past.

“The King’s mandate for the execution of the letters of convocation of 24th January, 1789. The King, in addressing letters of convocation for the States General to the various provinces subject to his authority,

desires that all his subjects may be summoned to assist at the election of the deputies who are to form that great and solemn assembly. His Majesty desires that every one of his subjects from the extremities of his kingdom, and their remotest habitations, should feel assured that his wishes and his demands shall reach the royal ear. His Majesty perceives with sincere satisfaction, that by means of gradual assemblies, convoked throughout the whole of France, for the representation of the third estate, he will be able to establish a sort of communication with all the inhabitants of his kingdom, and be brought near to their wants and wishes, in a sure and direct manner."

The placard then proceeded to speak of the nobility and the clergy ; of their convocation ; of the number of deputies which the bishops, abbés, chapters, and ecclesiastical communities, regulars and seculars of both sexes, and all ecclesiastics possessing fiefs, should send to the assemblies of the bailiwicks, and later, to the States General.

Then came something more concerning us :

"1. The parishes and communities, the burghs as well as the towns, shall assemble at

the town hall, before the judge, or some other public officer. At this assembly, all the inhabitants composing the third estate, born, or naturalised Frenchmen, having reached the age of twenty-five years, being domiciled, and enrolled as taxpayers, shall have the right to be present, to take part in the drawing up of the statements, and in the nomination of the deputies.

“2. The selected deputies shall form, at the town hall, and under the presidency of the municipal officers, the assembly of the *tiers état* of the town. They shall draw up the general statement of the grievances and complaints of the said town, and shall nominate the deputies who are to carry it up to the principal bailiwick.

“3. The number of deputies to be chosen by the country parishes and communities to bring up their statement, shall be two, where the number of households is two hundred and over, and shall be three, where the number of households is three hundred and over. This scale shall continue to be observed, for the larger parishes and communities.

“4. In the principal bailiwicks, the deputies of the third estate shall, in a pre-

liminary assembly, amalgamate the several statements into one book, and they shall then nominate a fourth of their number, to bring up the said book to the general assembly of the bailiwick.

“5. His Majesty commands that in the said principal bailliwicks, the election of the deputies of the third estate, for the States General, shall be proceeded with immediately after the amalgamation of all the statements of the towns, and of the communities which shall have sent them into the towns.”

You see, then, that, instead of nominating deputies whom we don't know from Adam and Eve, but who come down from Paris with good recommendations, as we do at present, we were to send up people from our own villages, which was reasonable. Then they chose the most capable, the most hard-working, and the best educated among them, to sustain our complaints before the king, the nobles, and the bishops. Managed after this fashion, we had every reason to hope our affairs would prosper.

Look at what our deputies did in '89, and what our deputies are doing now, and you will recognise how much better it is to be re-

presented by peasants, whom we chose because we knew them, than to be represented by men whom we accept because the *préfets* recommend them. Not that I wish to disparage these gentlemen, but, even among the best of things, there is a choice. It is plain that the deputies ought to represent the people who nominate them, and not the government which they are employed to inspect; that is only common sense. Suppose King Louis XVI., by means of his bailiffs, his seneschals, his provosts, his provincial governors, and his police, had kept the nomination of the deputies of the third estate in his own hands; what would have happened? These deputies would never have dared to contradict the king, who had given them their places, they would have approved of everything done by the government, and we should have remained in our degradation and abject poverty to this day.

Notwithstanding all that had been said, we had had our doubts up to this moment, so that I need not tell you with what enthusiasm and satisfaction we received the assurance that the States-General were positively to be assembled. We had been so often deceived

that we did not dare to believe in the prospect of anything good, but this time, it was really true.

About five o'clock in the evening, on that same day, Maître Jean and I were working in the forge, and in the highest spirits. My godfather would say, as he put the iron in the fire,

"Well, Michel, we are going to have the States General!"

And his large face would shine all over with joy.

Then I would answer him, laughing.

Our hammers began to clang again, with double rapidity. A light heart gives one a strong arm. Out of doors the mud was beyond belief. The snow had melted, the water was running in the streets, overflowing the gutters, and getting down into the cellars. The women were busy all day, sweeping it away from their doors with brooms. One kind of wretchedness brings others in its train. After we had supplied the *corvées* of the king, the nobles, and the monks, the idea of setting to work to pave the village streets was not likely to occur to

us, we were too happy to rest ourselves, and to live in the dirt.

All of a sudden, five or six men from Baraques, in their blue linen blouses, and their large felt hats which hung down on their shoulders,—Jacques Létumier, Nicolas Cochart, Claude Huré, Gauthier Courtois, in short, all the notables of the village,—appeared before the forge, and took their hats off with great ceremony.

“Ha, is that you, Létumier?” cried Maître Jean; “and you, Huré. Why, what the devil are you about?”

He laughed, but they all kept perfectly grave countenances, and Létumier, bending his back under the little porch, and bringing his voice from the bottom of his throat, said:

“Maître Jean Leroux, with your permission, we have a communication to make to you.”

“To me?”

“Yes, to yourself! relative to the elections.”

“All right; come in, then. You are standing in the mud.”

They came in, one by one. There was barely room for us all in the little space.

They were thinking how to begin their discourse, when Maître Jean said,

“Well, what is it? What have you got to ask me? Don’t be shy about it; if it is possible, you know me well——”

“This is what it is,” said Coquart; “you know the three divisions of Baraques vote together at the town?”

“Yes! what then?”

“The three divisions have two hundred households, so that we have a right to two deputies.”

“Certainly, and then?”

“Then, you are the first, that is a matter of course. It is the other we are puzzled about.”

“What! you wish to nominate *me*?” said Maître Jean; but I could see that he was flattered all the time.

“Yes, of course; but the other?”

Then Maître Jean let us see his satisfaction.

“We are nearly roasted here, so close to the fire,” he said. “Let us go into the inn, and have a bottle of wine together; that will clear our heads.”

They accepted his offer gladly. I was

going to remain in the forge, but Maître Jean looked round, from the middle of the road-way, and called me.

"Come along, Michel ! On a day like this we ought to be all together."

We went into the public room, and seated ourselves at a long table under the windows. Maître Jean sent for wine, tumblers, a loaf, and some knives. We touched our tumblers together, and Dame Catherine looked at us in surprise, wondering what we meant by that. Létumier wiped his mouth, and was about to explain our little festival to her, when Maître Jean said :

"As for me, all right, I accept ; because one ought to sacrifice oneself for the good of one's country. Only, I must let you know at once, that if you do not nominate Chauvel to be your second deputy I will refuse."

"Chauvel, the Calvinist ?" exclaimed Létumier, opening his eyes widely.

The others stared at one another, quite frightened, and stammered : "The Calvinist our deputy—he !"

"Listen," said Maître Jean ; "we are not going to a council to deliberate upon the mysteries of our holy religion, upon the sacra-

ments, and all the rest of it. We are going there to discuss business, and principally to get rid of our corvées, and tolls, our poll taxes, and duties, and burthens of all kinds, to make head against our lords and masters, if possible, and win something in the game of life. Well, I know I have good common sense—at least I believe I have; but there is something more than good common sense required to gain what we are going to play for. I know how to read, and write; I know where the yoke hurts us; and if there were nothing to do but to bray like an ass, I could do my part as well as anyone whom they may send from Quatre Vents, or Mittelbronn, or elsewhere. But that is not the question. When we go up yonder, we shall find cunning people of every kind; attorneys, bailiffs, seneschals, men full of knowledge, who will meet us with a thousand reasons out of the laws, the customs, and the usages, with this and with that,—and, if we are not able to answer them plainly, they will put the yoke on us again, for ever. Do you understand me?"

Létumier opened his mouth from ear to ear.

"Yes! But Chauvel! Chauvel?" said he.

"Let me finish," resumed Maître Jean. "I am very glad to be your deputy, and if there is one of our own people to speak up for us, I am capable of supporting him, and I will support him; but, as to my replying,—no, I cannot do that. I have neither knowledge nor experience sufficient for such a task; and I tell you, moreover, that the only man in the place who is capable of speaking for us, and defending us, is Chauvel. He knows everything, the laws, the ordinances, the customs, everything! Let me tell you that little man knows everything in all the books he has carried on his back for twenty-five years. Do you think, when he is on the roads, that he looks about him at the trees, and the fields, the hedges, the bridges, and the rivers. He does nothing of the sort; he is either reading one of his books as he walks, or he is thinking over the last he has read. So that, unless you are all fools, and want to keep your *corvées*, your tolls, and your taxes, you will choose him in the first instance, even before you choose me. If you send Chauvel, I will support him, never fear; but, if you do

not send him, you had better not take the trouble to nominate me at all, for I refuse beforehand."

Maître Jean spoke plainly; the others sat still, and scratched their ears.

"But," said Cochart, "will they accept him?"

"The placard says nothing about any difference between religions," replied Maître Jean. "Everybody is eligible, provided he is a Frenchman, twenty-five years old, and a taxpayer. Chauvel pays as we all do, perhaps more. Last year, our good king restored civil rights to the Lutherans, the Calvinists, and even the Jews. You did not know that? but you ought to have known it! Let us nominate Chauvel, and then we may make our minds easy. Take my word for it, he will do us more good and more honour than fifty Capuchins; he will defend our interests with good sense, and high courage. He will do honour to Baraques, believe me. Catherine! bring us another bottle."

They looked doubtful, and hesitated to speak. Maître Jean filled the glasses.

"This is my last word," he said; "if you do not nominate Chauvel, I refuse; if you

nominate him, I accept. To the health of our good king ! ”

They drank the toast, respectfully, even tenderly.

“ To the health of our good king ! ”

Then Létumier said, very gravely,

“ It will be hard to make the women swallow this, Leroux ; but, since this is your decision, here is my hand. ”

“ And here is mine, ” said another.

Then they all followed suit, and, having finished the wine, rose to go home. They were the notables ; we knew that the others would agree to whatever they proposed.

“ The affair is settled then ? ” Maitre Jean said, as he bade them adieu at the door.

“ Yes, yes, all settled ! ” they replied, as they plunged into the sea of mud which filled the roadway.

We went back to the forge ; all this made us thoughtful. We worked until seven o'clock, and then Nicole came and called us to supper.

Nothing more occurred that evening, but the day had been sufficiently full of events.

CHAPTER IX.

ON the following Sunday, when I was going down the old street of Baraques with my father, between six and seven o'clock in the morning, the sun rose up redly over the forest of Bonne Fontaine. It was the first fine day of the year, the thatched roofs and the black brick chimneys where the smoke gushed out into the air, shone like gold; the little patches of water along the roadside sparkled, white clouds dotted the blue sky; and we heard, in the far, far distance, the sound of clarionets, as the inhabitants of the different villages were setting out for the general rendezvous; we heard the drums beating the assembly in the town, and the first clash of the bells announcing the Mass of the Holy Ghost, before the elections.

My father, an old man already, weather-

beaten, meagre, with a grey beard, walked beside me. His clothing consisted of a blouse of unbleached linen, trousers of the same fastened with cord round his ankles, rough leather shoes without heels, laced up like boots. On his head was a cap of coarse woollen stuff, similar to those worn by all peasants at the time, the cap which was afterwards displayed upon the banner of the Republic. He was thoughtful, and every now and then he glanced to the right and left timidly, as though he dreaded a surprise. By dint of suffering one comes to distrust everything. The poor man said to me frequently :

“Be careful, Michel, do be careful! Let us say nothing! Let us hold our tongues! All this will end badly!”

I had more confidence ; the habit of listening to Maître Jean and Chauvel talking of the affairs of the country, and of reading everything which happened at Paris, Rennes, and Marseilles, had already given me more courage. Besides, I was eighteen years of age ; and though I had not a hair on my face, the forge work had broadened my shoulders, and hardened my hands, and I was not afraid to .

look any man in the face, were he soldier, citizen, or peasant. I liked to be well dressed ; on Sundays I wore my blue cloth breeches, my high boots, my velvet vest, blacksmith fashion ; and I don't deny that I looked at the pretty girls,—there's no harm in that, is there ?

All the village was afoot. When we reached the inn, we saw Maître Jean and Valentine in the public room, with the windows wide open, eating bread and drinking wine together before setting out. They were both in their Sunday clothes ; Maître Jean in his master's costume—a coat with wide tails, a red waistcoat, breeches buckled under the knee, and silver buckles in his round shoes. His journeyman, Valentine, wore a blouse of grey linen, the breast and collar gaily embroidered in red ; a large silver heart fastened to his shirt, and his peasant's cap hung over his right ear. He saw us first, and called out :

“ Here they are ! Here they are ! ”

We went in.

“ Come along, Bastien,” said Maître Jean, heartily, as he filled our glasses, “ here is to the health of our good king ! ”

My father answered, with tears in his eyes:

"Yes, yes, Jean, to the health of our good king ! Long live our good king !"

It was the fashion at that time to believe that the King did everything ; to look upon him as a divinity watching over his children. My father loved the King. We drank our wine, and meantime almost all the notables arrived. They were the same as we had seen the day before, with the addition of old Létumier, who was so old now that he was nearly blind, and had to be led about, to keep him from falling. Notwithstanding that, he was determined to vote, and while Maitre Jean was sending for more wine and filling our glasses again, and every one was talking, and hob-nobbing, the poor old man said :

"Ah, how long life is ! how long life is ! But, never mind, when one lives to see a day like this, one does not regret one's sufferings."

Maitre Jean answered him :

"You are right, Father Létumier ; when the harvest comes we do not count the day of rain, hail, and snow. We look at our sheaves. They have cost us labour, it is true, but we are going to thresh and winnow, and grind them ; we shall have bread, please God, and our children also. Long live our good King !"

We all repeated, once more, "Long live our good King!"

And then we set out, walking in pairs, arm-in-arm, my father and I bringing up the rear.

When we had started, all the people from Baraques, who had assembled around the fountain, followed us with clarionets and drums. I never heard anything like it; the whole country resounded with music, and with the voices of the bells; along the roads were throngs of people, dancing, tossing up their caps in the air, and shouting, "Long live our good King! Long live the father of his people!"

The bells were ringing everywhere, from the top of the mountain, to the edge of the plain, there was no end to it. As we approached the town, the humming sound increased. Flags were flying from the church, from the windows of the barracks, on the hospital, everywhere, rich flags of white silk bearing the golden *fleur de lis*. I have never seen so grand a sight as that.

In after days, the victories of the Republic, the cannon which roared from our ramparts, swelled our hearts also, and we cried "Long live France! Long live the Nation! Long

live the Republic!" with ardent pride. But at the time I am describing, no one thought of killing men, we thought everything could be settled at once, amid fraternal embraces.

Close to the town, where the two roads meet, we met the curé, Christophe, at the head of his parishioners. We all halted, raised our hats, and cried out together, "Long live our good King!" The curé and Maître Jean embraced each other, and the two parishes joined company, singing, laughing, playing the clarionet, and beating drums. The approaches to the town were full of people. The bridges were blocked up with carts, and vehicles of every kind; all the old people had insisted on being brought to the court house; they all wanted to vote once in their lives, and many of them were crying like children.

No one can say that the people of that time did not possess good sense; every one of them wished to have acknowledged rights.

So great was the crowd, that we had to wait fully ten minutes before we could pass the bridge. But you should have seen the interior of the town; the streets swarming with people, the windows all decorated with flags. You should have heard the shouts of

“Long live the King!” begin, now on the market place, then at the arsenal, and make the round of the ramparts and the glacis, like a great rolling peal of thunder. The Mass of the Holy Ghost had begun, but how were we to get near the church? The patrols of the regiment of La Fère themselves were pushed back, for all their cries of “make way there! make way!” in the corners, and there they were obliged to stay.

Then Maitre Jean remembered that Jacques Renaudot’s tavern was close by, and, without speaking, he made a sign to us to keep close to him, and led M. Christophe, Valentine, my father, and myself, up to the steps of the *Cheval Blanc*. But we could not get in, without making our way round to the back door, which opened into the kitchen, for the public room was as full as an egg, and the doors and windows were all opened, to give the people air to breathe.

Jeanette Renaudot received us kindly, and took us up to a room on the first floor, which was not yet occupied, where we had wine, meat, in short, everything we required. The others were looking about for us, everywhere in the crowd. We could not call them or

ask them to join us, so we remained by ourselves until one o'clock in the afternoon, when half the villages had voted, and the people from Baraques, having come up opposite to the inn on their way to the Court house, we went out, and taking a short cut down a bye street, reached the Court house before any of them. They thought we had been there waiting for them all this time, and exclaimed :

“ There they are ! There they are ! ”

The old Court house, with its clock tower, its large windows under the clock, its great hall, into which the villagers passed by scores, and in which they seemed lost, was filled with a buzzing sound. Looked at from a distance it must have seemed like an ant hill.

The Baraquins passed before the people of Lutzelbourg. Maitre Jean, Valentine, my father, and I were in the front ; but the Vilschbergers had not yet finished voting, and we had to wait some time on the steps. Every man's heart was beating at the thought of what he was going to do ; and behind us in the intervals of silence between the shouts of “ Long live the good King,” I heard a clear, shrill voice, a voice we all knew well, the voice of Marguerite Chauvel, crying, after the fashion of the vendors of almanacks :

“‘*What is the Third Estate? What is the Third Estate?*’ by M. l’Abbé Sieyès. Buy ‘*What is the Third Estate?*’ ‘*Assembly of Bailiwicks by Monseigneur Le duc d’Orleans.*’ Who wants the ‘*Assembly of the Bailiwicks?*’”

I turned to Maître Jean; and asked him :

“Do you hear little Marguerite?”

“Yes, I have been listening to her for a long time. What good people these Chauvels are! They may boast that they have done their country good. You ought to go and tell Marguerite to send her father here; I am sure he is not far off, and it will give him pleasure to hear himself nominated.”

I immediately pushed through the crowd, by aid of my elbows, and having reached the bottom of the steps, I could see Marguerite from thence, selling her books in the old Place des Ormes, her basket on a bench by her side. You cannot imagine the animation and activity of the girl. She stopped the peasants as they passed her by, she caught them by their sleeves, she spoke to them in French and in German. She was in the full tide of the sale, and this was the first time the vivacity of her sparkling black eyes struck me, notwithstanding-

ing the many other thoughts which were passing through my mind.

I made my way down to the bench where she was, and as I drew near, Marguerite caught hold of my coat and said :

"Sir, sir, '*what is the Third Estate?*' by M. l'Abbé Sieyès, won't you buy '*the Third Estate*'?"

"What, do you not recognise me, Marguerite?" I said.

"Why, it's Michel!" She let me go and laughed heartily.

She wiped the heat drops from her brown cheeks, and threw her loose thick black hair back upon her neck. We were surprised to find each other there.

"How you work, Marguerite," I said to her, "what pains you take."

"Ah," she replied, "this is a great day, a day to work hard."

She showed me the bottom of her petticoat, and her little feet, like those of a deer, covered with mud.

"Look at the state I am in! Ever since six o'clock yesterday we have been on foot. We have just come from Luneville with fifty dozen copies of the *Third Estate*, and ever

since morning we have been selling them off rapidly. Look here, these are all we have, not more than ten or twelve dozens." She was proud and delighted, and I held her hand, pleased and surprised.

"And your father, where is he?"

"I don't know; somewhere in the town. He is going about to the taverns. I am sure he has sold all we had, and that we shall not have one left to-night."

Then she took her little hand away, and said, "You must go, Michel, the people from Baraques are going up now."

"But I am not twenty-five years old, Marguerite. I have no vote."

"Never mind, we must not waste our time in gossip."

And she immediately began again :

"Gentlemen ! here is the *Third Estate*, the *Third Estate*—"

I went away, astonished. Hitherto, I had only seen Marguerite with her father, and now she seemed to me quite another person ; her energy surprised me, I thought :

"She has a much better head for business than you have, Michel."

And even when I had rejoined Maitre Jean

in the midst of the crowd on the balcony, I was still thinking of this.

"Well?" said my godfather when I appeared.

"Marguerite is alone in the square, her father is selling pamphlets about the town."

At this moment we were going down from the balcony to the great corridor, which led to the provost's audience hall. The turn of the Baraquins had come, and before we reached the hall we could hear the voting :

"Maître Jean Leroux ! Mathurin Chauvel !
Jean Leroux ! Mathurin Chauvel ! Maître
Jean Leroux ! Chauvel !

Maitre Jean, whose face was beaming with delight, said to me :

"What a pity Chauvel is not here, he would be so happy !"

Just then I turned my head, and saw Chauvel, who had come up behind us, looking astonished at what he heard.

"Is it you who have done this ?" he asked Maître Jean.

"Yes," replied my godfather, joyfully.

"It does not surprise me, on your part," said Chauvel, as he pressed his hand, "I have known you for a long time, but what does

surprise and delight me, is to hear Catholics nominate a Calvinist. The people are laying aside their superstitions,—the people will win !”

We were getting on slowly, and turning into the great hall by twos. After a minute, we saw, above the bare-headed crowd, M. Schneider, the provost, arrayed in a black mantle with a white border, his square cap on his head, and his sword by his side. The aldermen and syndics, in black coats and scarfs, sat on a lower level. A large crucifix hung upon the wall. This is all I can remember.

The names of Jean Leroux and Chauvel succeeded each other like the strokes of a clock. The first who said “Maitre Létumier and Chauvel !” was Maitre Jean himself, who was recognized by his vote, at which the provost smiled. The first who said “Jean Leroux and Létumier !” was Chauvel, but this time the provost, who knew him, did not smile, and the lieutenant Lesjardins bent down, and spoke to him at the same time.

I had passed on to the right, as I had no vote. Chauvel, Maitre Jean and I went out together, and had great difficulty in getting

through the crowd ; and even below, instead of going through the square, we had to go back, and pass by the old market, for the whole space was filled by the people from Mittelbronn, coming up to vote. Here, Chauvel left us, and went off to sell his books.

“ This evening,” he said, “ we will talk it all over.”

Maitre Jean and I went home, very thoughtful. The people were going away tired, but happy.

Some of them had drunk a little more than was good for them, and went along the road singing, and throwing their arms about. My father and Valentine did not come home until a later hour.

In the evening, after supper, Chauvel and his daughter arrived as usual. Chauvel brought us the speeches which the provost and his lieutenant had delivered the morning before the elections, in the great hall of the Court-house, also an account of the assembling of the nobles, the clergy, and the Third Estate. The speech was a very fine one, and Maitre Jean expressed his astonishment that people who spoke so well should always have treated us so badly, but Chauvel said, with a smile :—

“Henceforth, they will have to make their deeds agree with their words. These gentlemen begin to find out that the people are stronger than they, and so they take their hats off to them ; but the people must also comprehend their strength and use it, then justice will be done.”

CHAPTER X.

NOW I must tell you something which it moves me to think of, even yet, and from which all the happiness of my life has come.

First, you must know, that in April, all those who had been nominated to draw up our complaints and statements, met together at the bailiwick of Luxheim. They lodged there, in the taverns. Maitre Jean and Chauvel went thither on Monday morning, and did not return until Saturday night. This lasted three weeks. All the country side was astir ; one heard nothing but disputes about the abolition of the taxes, the tolls, the militia, the single or collective vote, and a thousand other things which we had never thought of formerly. The tavern was full of Alsatians and Lorrainers ; they drank and thumped the tables with their fists, and raged like wolves.

One would have thought they were going to strangle one another, and yet, they were all of one mind, as the people always are. They desired what we desired ; if it had been otherwise, what battles we should have seen !

Valentine and I were working at the forge opposite ; we repaired cart wheels, and shod horses for these disputants. Sometimes I tried an argument with Valentine, for he thought everything must be lost, if the nobles and the bishops should get the worst of it ; I wished to convince him, but on the other hand he was such a fine fellow that I could not bear to hurt his feelings. His only consolation was to talk to me about a hut which he had in the wood, behind Roche Plate, where he caught birds. He also had snares in the ditches and hedges, by permission of the inspector, Claude Coudray, to which he would bring a string of thrushes, or other small birds, occasionally, as a token of his gratitude.

In the midst of the great overturning of all things, whose approach the dullest of us perceived, Valentine thought of nothing but his snares.

“ The nesting season is coming, Michel ; after the nests we shall have the calling time,

and then the great flight of the thrushes, which go down to Alsace when the grapes begin to ripen. The year promises well, and if the fine weather lasts, we shall take quantities."

His long face grew longer, he smiled with his wide, toothless mouth ; his eyes grew round ; in his imagination he saw the thrushes hanging by their necks to his lines ; and he pulled long hairs out of the tails of all the horses we shod, to make his snares.

Meantime, I was thinking of the business they were transacting at the bailiwick, and especially of the abolition of the militia, which interested me more than all the rest, because I should have to draw in September.

Every evening, for some time past, when I returned home, I found Létumier's wife and daughter spinning with my mother, by the side of my father Stephen and Mathurine, who were making baskets. They seemed to be quite at home, and stayed as late as ten o'clock. These Létumiers were well-to-do people for that time, and their daughter, Annette, a tall, reddish *blonde*, but very fair and fresh looking, was an excellent creature. She was constantly coming and going past

the smithy,—with a little bucket under her arm—to bring water from the fountain, she said ; and she never passed without giving us a sweet look. She wore a short petticoat, a blue linen bodice with shoulder straps, and her arms were bare to the elbows.

I saw all this, but I paid no attention to it, and did not suspect anything. In the evening, while she was spinning, I often talked gaily to her, the kind of harmless nonsense which boys talk to girls, and without thinking any more about it.

“ But one Saturday my mother said to me :

“ Michel, you would do well to go and dance to-morrow, at the *Boudinet de la Cigogne*, and you had better put on your red waistcoat, and your silver heart.”

“ I was surprised at this, and asked her why?

She smiled, and said : “ You shall see.”

My father, who was plaiting thoughtfully, as usual, said :

“ The Létumiers are rich people ; you ought to dance with their daughter ; she would be a good match for you.”

My father’s words troubled me. Not that I did not like the girl ; no, indeed, but that the idea of marriage had not occurred to me.

However, I stupidly answered, just to please my father :

“ Very well. But I am too young to marry, I have not yet drawn for the militia.”

“ At any rate,” said my mother, “ it does not cost you anything to go there, and it will please the Létumiers ; it is just a kindness, that’s all.”

So I answered : “ All right. I will go.”

The following Sunday, after vespers, I went down the hill, feeling not a little surprised at myself.

In those days old Dame Pagrotte kept the tavern of the *Cigogne*, at Lutzelbourg, and villagers danced under the elms at the end of the garden. There were always plenty of dancers there, for M. Christophe was not like many other *curés* ; he pretended not to see or hear anything, even the clarionet of little Jean Rat.

I went down the street, and up the staircase at the bottom of the yard, looking at the boys and girls spinning round upon the terrace ; and I had scarcely reached the top of the steps, when Dame Létumier saw me, and cried out :

“ This way, Michel, this way !”

Annette was there, and she blushed when she saw me. I took her arm and asked her to waltz with me.

"Oh, Monsieur Michel!" was all she said, and came with me. In all times, before the Revolution as well as after it, girls have been the same, liking one man better than another. I danced with her, four, five, six times; I do not know how often. Every one laughed. Dame Létumier looked glad; Annette blushed and looked down. Naturally, we did not talk politics; we laughed, and joked, and ate cakes. Such is life! I thought:

"My mother will be glad, she will be complimented about her son."

But about six in the evening, I had had enough of it, and without thinking, I went down into the street, and took a short cut towards the Roches through the firwood.

It was an unusually hot day for the season; everything was verdant and flowery, the violets, the myrtle, and the strawberry plants were all budding, and covering the paths with greenery. One would have thought it was the month of June. I see these things as though they were of yesterday, and yet, I am a great many years older now.

Towards the summit of the rock, on the flat ground, I struck into the high road, from whence one can see the roofs of Baraques, and, a little in advance of me, I saw a girl, with a great square basket on her shoulders, her back bent, and her clothes covered with dust, trudging sturdily along. I said to myself—

“That is Marguerite! Yes, it is she!”

I hurried on, and cried out, “Marguerite, Marguerite!”

She turned round, with her brown shining face, her long hair, and her bright piercing eyes, and laughed, as she said :

“What! Michel! What a fortunate meeting!”

I looked at the coarse strap which seemed to cut into her shoulder, I was astonished, and troubled.

“You look tired,” said she ; “have you come from far ?”

“No, I have only come from Lutzelbourg—from the dance.”

“Ah,” said she, “that’s right,” and she walked on. “I have come from Dabo, I have been all over the county. I have sold such a number of the *Tiers Etat*. I got them in good time, the deputies from the parishes have just assembled. The day before yesterday, in the morning, I was at Luxheim, in Lorraine.”

"Are you made of iron?" said I, walking close to her.

"Of iron? Not at all, I am a little tired. But the great blow is struck, and all is going well!"

She laughed, but she must have been very tired, for, when she came to the little wall alongside of the old orchard, she rested her basket on the edge, and said :

"Let us talk a little, Michel, until I get my breath again." Then I took her basket, and pushed it completely on the wall.

"Yes, Marguerite," I said, "do take time to breathe. I think you work harder than any of us."

"Yes, but then the cause is progressing!" said she, with the same voice, and the same glance as her father's; "we are making way. Already we have won back our old rights; soon we shall demand new ones. Everything must be restored to us, everything! Everything must be made equal—the same taxes for all, and the same chances for all who have courage and industry. And then, *we must have liberty*. There!"

She looked at me. I looked at her with admiration. I thought: "What are we beside these people? What have we done for the country? What have we suffered?"

Then she said :

"Yes ! it is true. Now, the statements are almost finished, and we are going to sell them by thousands. Meanwhile I go about alone. We have only our pedlar's trade to live by, and I must work for two, now that my father is working for all. The day before yesterday I brought him twelve livres ; that will be enough for him for a week. I had made fifteen, and since then I have made four, so that I have seven. I will go to see him to-morrow. Yes, this will go on, Michel ! And then, during the States General, we shall sell the reports of everything that passes to the Third Estate. You understand ? We will not let go our hold of the minds of the people. They must know everything,—they must be taught. Do you understand ?"

"Yes, yes, Marguerite," said I, "you speak like your father ; you almost make me cry."

She was sitting on the wall, beside her basket. I looked at her. She had ceased to speak, and her eyes were lifted up. I looked at her. Her elbow was on the basket, and as I did not move my eyes from her, at length she perceived it, and said :

"I am all over dust, am I not ?"

I asked her, without answering :—

“How old are you now?”

“The first Sunday after Easter, in fifteen days,” she said, “I shall be sixteen years old. And you?”

“Eighteen.”

“Yes, you are strong,” said she, jumping down, and passing the strap over her shoulder, “help me with this. That’s it.”

In lifting the basket, I felt that it was terribly heavy, and I said :

“This is too heavy for you, Marguerite ; you ought to let me carry it.” Then she, walking with her back bent, looked askant at me, smilingly, and said :

“Bah, when one works to recover one’s rights, nothing is too heavy ; and we shall have them, we shall have them.”

I did not dare to reply. My heart was full. I had the greatest admiration for Chauvel and his daughter, I revered them.

Marguerite did not seem fatigued any longer ; she spoke from time to time :

“Yes, down there at Lixheim the nobles and the monks tried boldly to defend themselves. But they were well answered, they heard what they deserved to hear. And it will

all be down in the statement, nothing will be forgotten. The king will know what is thought about them, and the nation also. But, we must see the States General. My father says they will do good, and I believe it. We shall see! And we will support our deputies; they may depend on us."

We had reached Baraques. I accompanied Marguerite to their door. It was dark. She took the huge key out of her pocket, and bade me good night. I left her.

When I got home, my father and mother were expecting me. They looked at me.

"Well?" said my mother.

"Well, we danced."

"And then?"

"Then I came home."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"You did not wait for her?"

"No."

"And you did not say anything?"

"What did you wish me to say?"

"Michel, you are a stupid fellow, and the girl is more stupid than you to care about you. What are we in comparison with them?" Her face was positively green with anger. I looked quietly at her without replying. My father said:

"Leave Michel alone, don't make such a noise."

But she would not listen to anything, she went on :

"Did any one ever see such a fool ! Here have I been enticing that old Létumier woman here these six months, in order to serve the boy's cause,—an old miser she is, who can talk of nothing but her fields, her flax crop, and her cows. I put up with it all, I have patience, and then, when it is all on the point of being settled, this fellow refuses. Perhaps he thinks he is a lord, and that people ought to run after him. To think that one has such a fool in one's family, is enough to drive one mad!"

I wanted to answer her, but she would not let me :

"Hold your tongue !" she said, "you will die on a dunghill, and we with you."

And as I did hold my tongue, she began again :

"Yes, my gentleman refuses ! One may pass one's life in feeding Nicholas and Michel, good-for-nothing fellows who allow themselves to be crimped, for certain I am this one has been crimped, as much as ever his brother was—there's no lack of hussies in

the country, and since he refuses, it is clear he loves one of them."

She leaned on her broom, and looked at me over her shoulder. I could not bear more, and went away, silently, up the ladder. Since Claude had left us Stephen and I slept upstairs under the thatch. My mother called after me, from below :

" Ah ! you runaway ! I see too clearly, you dare not stay, you rascal."

I threw myself on the big box, and hid my face with my arms, thinking.

" Ah, my God, is this possible ?"

And still my mother cried, louder and louder :

" Oh, the fool ! oh, the rascal !"

My father tried to appease her, but she went on a long while.

I could not keep back my tears. The noise did not cease until one o'clock, but even then I could not sleep, I was too unhappy. I thought :

" I have been working for ten years—the others have gone away, but I have remained ; I have paid the debts, I have given my last farthing to support my parents, and because I will not marry this girl for her money, because, in fact, I will not marry a hemp-field, I am a good-for-nothing rascal, no better

than Nicholas, a fool and a wretch !” I grew more and more angry. Stephen was sleeping peacefully near me. I could not close my eyes. At last, at four o’clock, I felt that I must have fresh air, I was stifling, and I went down. My father was not asleep, and he heard me.

“ Is that you, Michel ?” he said, “ are you going out ?”

“ Yes, father, I am going out.”

I would have liked to speak to him, he was the best, the kindest of men, but what could I say to him ? My mother was not asleep either, her eyes were shining in the darkness, but she did not speak ; and I went out. The mist was coming up from the valley, and it cooled and refreshed me. I walked on straight before me ; and God knows what I thought of ! I wanted to get away from Baraques, to go to Saverne, or Quatre Vents ; a journeyman blacksmith can always find work. The idea of forsaking my father, Mathurine, and Stephen, made my heart ache, but I knew my mother would never forget the profitable fields of the Létumiers, and that she would throw this quarrel in my teeth to the end of time. I have forgotten all my thoughts, but I remember that at five o’clock, after the

morning dews, the sun rose, the beautiful spring sun. The air had calmed me by this time, and I said to myself :

“ No, no, I will stay, I will bear everything. I cannot forsake my father, and my brother and sister. It is my duty to sustain them. Let my mother rail as she will, I will stay.”

Thinking thus, I went up again to the village, across the little orchards and gardens on the hill side. The sun grew warmer, the birds sang, the dewdrops hung, trembling, at the ends of the leaves. I saw the white smoke from our forge rising into the sky. Valentine was up. I hurried on, and when I had almost reached the village, I heard the sound of some one digging, on the other side of the hedge. I looked over, and there was Marguerite, behind Chauvel's house, digging up a corner of their little orchard, in order to plant potatoes there. When I remembered that she had returned only the night before, so tired, I was astonished. I looked over the hedge, and the longer I looked at her, the more I admired her. There she was, in her short petticoat, and her wooden shoes, thinking of nothing but her work. Then I saw, for the first time, that she had round brown

cheeks, a low forehead, with beautiful brown hair, which was like fine down around her temples. She was like her father, her legs and arms were thin and firm, her little figure was solid and well-built, and as she pushed the spade into the ground it crushed the roots, and she clenched her short white teeth. The sun which came through the flowering apple trees, shone upon her, through the flickering shade of the leaves. The ground smoked, everything was bright, one could feel that it was going to be very hot.

After I had looked at Marguerite for a long time, my mother's words returned to me: "He loves another :" and I said, "it is true. I do love another ! This one has no fields, no meadows, no cows, but she has a strong brave heart, and she shall be my wife ! All the rest will come. But first I must win her, and I will win her by my work."

From that time my mind never changed, I respected Marguerite more than ever, the idea never occurred to me for one moment that she could be the wife of any man but me.

I turned away, unseen by her, full of courage, and even of gladness, and went on to the street. Valentine was waiting for me in

front of the smithy, with his sleeves turned up, and his long thin arms bare.

"What fine weather, Michel!" he cried out, as I drew near, "what a beautiful day! Ah, if it were but Sunday, we might have such a walk in the wood."

"Yes," said I laughing, "but it is not Sunday, but Monday. What are we going to do this morning?"

"Old Rautzan came last evening, and brought us two dozen hatchets to repair, and there's Christophe Rosine's cart wheel to do."

"All right," said I, "let us begin."

I never set to my work with more heart. The iron was in the fire. Valentine took the pincers and the small hammer, I took the axe, and we began.

Each time in my life that I have seen clearly what it was that I wished, and that, instead of dreaming, going on in my usual routine from day to day, I have come to a decision on some difficult point, which required attention and courage, I have recovered my good humour, I have sung, and whistled, and worked like a giant. The most wearisome thing in life is to be without an object, but I had found one now, in which I took extraordinary pleasure.

You must not suppose my object was easy to accomplish. That very morning Valentine made me realise that the matter was by no means an easy one, by some remarks which he made when Marguerite was passing the smithy with her great basket on her back, on her daily tramp. He had no suspicion of what was passing in my mind, and therefore his words were very important to me.

"Look, Michel," said he, pointing to the girl, who was already going up the hill, "is it not terrible to see a child of that age with such a load on her back? These people go about in the rain, the snow, the sunshine, they are brave to their fingers' ends, they never shrink from toil, or pain. If they were not heretics, they would be martyrs. But the devil inspires them to sell their wicked little books against our holy religion, and the order established by the Almighty in the world. And so, instead of deserving to be rewarded, they deserve the gallows."

"Oh, Valentine, the gallows!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," he answered, poking his nose out, and tightening his lips, "the gallows, and even the stake, if justice were done. Why should we defend them, when they use their good sense

and their honesty against us ? They are like wolves and foxes, the more cunning they are, the more we should hasten to destroy them. If they were stupid, like sheep, they would not be so dangerous ; on the contrary, we might shear them, and let them live quietly in the stable. But then Calvinists will not listen to anything ; they are a real pest."

"But they are God's creatures, like ourselves, Valentine."

"God's creatures ! If they were God's creatures would the *curés* refuse to register their births, marriages, and deaths ? Should they be buried in fields, like animals, instead of in holy ground ? Should they be incapable of holding any situation, as Chauvel is ? Would every one cry out against them ? No, Michel, certainly not ! I am sorry for them, for really, except their evil trade, there is nothing to reproach them with, but Maitre Jean is very wrong to allow these people to frequent his house. Chauvel will come to a bad end, believe me. The Baraquins are fools to have nominated him, and I warn you, when order is restored, the very first people who will be laid hands on will be Chauvel and his daughter, and perhaps Maitre Jean and ourselves, and

we shall be purified in prison for a few years. As for me, I shall not have deserved it, but I will acknowledge the justice of the king, all the same. Justice is justice, we shall have deserved it. It is unfortunate ; but justice before everything."

He bent his long back, joined his hands, and shut his eyes resignedly ; while I thought :

"How can any one be so stupid ! There is no sense in what he says."

But nevertheless, I saw plainly that every one would be against me if I proposed to marry Marguerite. But I did not care, and my courage surprised me, especially when I found myself going home in the evening, without feeling at all afraid, and determined to let my mother talk, without answering her a word. As I drew near the house, my poor father came out, and made me a sign to turn aside into a little dark lane, between the orchards, that I might not be seen. I followed him, and the poor man, who actually trembled, said :

"Your mother has been making a great noise, my boy,—it was terrible. Now, what are you going to do ? You are going away, are you not ?"

I saw that he was suffering the keenest anxiety, and I set his mind at rest at once.

"No, my father, no. How do you suppose that I could forsake you, and Stephen, and Mathurine? It is impossible."

He looked quite happy in a moment, as if he had come to life again.

"Oh, that is right," said he. "I knew you would stay, Michel; yes, I am glad I spoke to you. She is not in the right; no, indeed, and she gets angry for so little. I have suffered a great deal in my life; but if you stay, all will be right."

He held my hand, and I felt overpowered. "Yes, father," I said, "I will remain; and if my mother scolds, I will remember that she is my mother."

Then he was quite satisfied.

"That is right," said he; "but now, wait here for a few minutes; I will go into the house alone; for if your mother saw us coming in together, she would turn on me. You understand?"

"Yes, yes, father, go on."

He went out of the lane, and a few minutes later I quietly followed him, and went home. My mother was spinning, near the hearth, at

the end of the room, and I am sure she thought I had come to tell her something ; perhaps, that I was going away ;—she followed me about with her piercing eyes ;—and that she was prepared to curse me. Mathurine and Stephen were plaiting straw beside her, and they did not dare to raise their eyes. My father was cutting up firewood, and looked at me sideways, but I did not take any notice. I simply said :

“ Good evening, father ; good evening, mother ; I am tired to-day. We had a great deal to do at the forge.”

I went up the ladder ; no one answered. I lay down, satisfied that I had done rightly, and that night I slept well.

CHAPTER X.

THE next day, when I went to work, I found the tavern of the "Three Pigeons" already full of people; and they were still coming along the road, some in carts, and others on foot. A report had gone abroad that the statement of our complaints and grievances was nearly finished, and that it was about to be sent up to Metz, to be added to those from the other bailiwicks.

Since the day of the elections a great number of the deputies to the bailiwick had brought their wives and children to Lixheim; and now they were all going home again.

They called to us as they passed by:

"It is done. The others are coming this evening; all is settled."

Valentine and I were delighted to have Maitre Jean with us at the forge again. We had worked together for ten years, and it was

very wearisome to be three whole weeks without seeing his kind broad face, or hearing him cry :

“ Come along, boys !” or, “ Stop, let us rest a minute.”

So, while we were hanging up our coats, we talked of the good news, and watched the crowd of people who stopped at the tavern. Nicole and Dame Catherine brought out chairs to help the women to get down from the carts, and they were all congratulating each other, for they were old acquaintances. I must tell you that since the husbands had been nominated deputies, there was a great deal of bowing and complimenting ; every one had become very ceremonious, and they called one another “ Madame !”

Valentine was excessively amused.

“ Do listen to them, Michel,” he said. “ There is the Countess Gros-Jacques, and the Baroness Jarniques ! Pray look at them ! We shall learn what fine manners are now-a-days.”

He was ready enough to find out the absurdities of every one who was not a noble. He would look at the women bowing to one another, and laugh till he cried, and then he would say :

"This sort of thing becomes them as much as a lace frill would become Finaude, Brother Benedict's she-ass. Ah, the beggars! And to think that creatures like these dare to revolt against His Majesty the king, against the queen, and all the powers from on high! to think that they talk about rights! Ah; I would give them their rights, if I had the handling of them,—I would send them about their business pretty quickly; and if they were not satisfied, I would double my Swiss guards and my constabulary."

He would talk away like this, as he worked. I knew all his thoughts; he could not understand his own meaning without talking; and he amused me very much.

We had been at work fully three hours, when a shadow was thrown upon the forge, from the little door, and I turned and saw Marguerite. She had something covered up in her apron, and she said:

"I have brought you a job. My spade is broken. Could you mend it for me this evening or to-morrow morning?"

Valentine took the spade from her; it was notched and the handle was loose. I was

delighted, and as Marguerite looked at me, I smiled at her, as much as to say :

“ Make your mind easy. You shall see how nicely I will do it.”

At last, she too smiled, seeing how anxious I was to do her this little service.

“ This evening or to-morrow morning !” said Valentine, “ it cannot be done, but if you will come back to-morrow evening——”

“ Nonsense,” I exclaimed, “ what is it you are making a piece of work about ? We have plenty of work, no doubt, but Marguerite’s spade must be the first thing done. Leave it to me, Valentine, I will take care of it.”

“ Very well,” said he, “ I have no objection, but it will take longer than you think, and we are very busy.”

Marguerite laughed.

“ Well then, I may reckon upon it, Michel ?”

“ Certainly, Marguerite, you shall have it this evening.”

She went away, and I immediately got the little anvil ready, put the old iron in the fire, and began to blow the bellows. Valentine looked at me in surprise, my eagerness astonished him ; and though he said nothing, I felt my ears growing red, and then my

cheeks. So I began to sing the old song of the blacksmiths :

"Bon forgeron, ton feu s'allume."

And he, according to custom, took it up, swelling out his voice, singing through his nose, and lingering on each word, in the real old plaintive style. Our hammers kept time, and at the mere thought that I was working for Marguerite, my heart overflowed with joy. I do not think I ever worked better in my life ; my hammer rose more quickly than it fell, and the iron spread itself out like paste.

I forged my spade, first hot and then cold. I shaped it out squarely, rather long, very light, with a straight line in the middle, and I rounded off the edge sharply ; then I set it so firmly in the iron socket, that Valentine paused in his work to admire mine, and I heard him murmuring to himself :

"Every one has his particular work. Maitre Jean has no equal for horse-shoes, and I have a capital eye for wheel-tires. It is a gift from heaven ; no one shall ever persuade me to the contrary. Michel will be first-rate at spades, and shovels, pick-axes and coulters ; that is the Lord's gift to him."

He came and went constantly, and asked

me if he could help me. "No, no," I answered, quite proud and pleased with the progress I was making.

I began my song again, and he took it up, and we worked on.

At five o'clock my spade was finished. It shone like silver, and was as sound as a bell. Valentine took it in his hand, balanced it, and said :

"Old Rebstock, of Ribeaupierre, who sells his scythes, his spades, and his coulter, all through Switzerland, might be proud to put his big R on this and say : 'I made it.' Yes, Michel, the Chauvels may boast of having a spade which will last longer than themselves. This is your first master-piece."

You may suppose I was glad, for Valentine knew his business well ; but my pride at his praises was nothing to the pleasure I should have in taking the spade to Marguerite. But it needed a new handle, and I was determined it should have a good one, of seasoned ash. So I ran off immediately to our neighbour Rigaud, the old turner, who set to work, with his great spectacles on his nose, and made me just such a handle as I wished for, nice and round, the top not too thick, and solidly set

in to the socket, both light and strong. I paid him for it on the spot, and I went back to the forge, and put the spade away behind the door, waiting until our day's work should be done. At seven o'clock, when I was washing my hands and face and neck, at the pump, in front of the forge, I saw Marguerite sitting before their door, peeling potatoes. So I showed her the spade from a distance, and then ran towards her, crying :

"Here it is! What do you think of it, Marguerite?"

She took the spade and looked at it, wondering. I could hardly breathe.

"Ah," said she, looking at me slyly, "Valentine made that."

So I answered her, reddening up all over my face :

"I suppose you think I cannot do anything?"

"Oh, no, but it is so beautifully made! Do you know, Michel, you are a good workman?"

She smiled, and I was delighted again, until she said :

"But it will cost me a good deal. How much do I owe you, Michel?"

When I heard her say this, it hurt me, and I answered her angrily :

“ You want to vex me then, Marguerite ? I work for you ; I bring you a spade as a present,—I am glad to think that I am giving you pleasure,—and you ask me how much it costs ? ”

Seeing my troubled face, she said :

“ But, Michel, you are not reasonable in this. Every work deserves its wage ; and then, you have used Maitre Jean’s coal, and your day’s work belongs to him, not to yourself.”

She was right, and I knew it ; but nevertheless I said : “ No, no, that is not the case ; ” but I was growing very angry, when Chauvel came up suddenly, with his stick in his hand, and took hold of my arm.

“ Hollo, Michel,” said he, “ what is all this about ? Are you quarrelling, you two ? ”

He had just returned from Lixheim, and he looked at me pleasantly, but I could not speak, I was in such confusion. Marguerite answered at once :

“ This is the matter, father : Michel has completely repaired my spade, and now he has brought it home.”

Ah

Chauvel, “ and why ? ”

A fortunate idea came into my head, and I exclaimed :

"No, you shall not make me take a farthing, Monsieur Chauvel. Have you not lent me books a hundred times ? Did you not get my sister Lisbeth a good place at Vasselonne ? And now, are you not helping every one in the country to recover his rights ? When I work for you, it is out of friendship and gratitude ; I should despise myself if I said, ' this costs so-and-so.' It would be against my nature."

He looked closely at me with his little bright eyes, and answered :

"All right ; all right. But I have not done all you say, in order to get what I want out of people without paying them ; if I had any notions of the kind, I too should despise myself. You understand, Michel ?"

Then I did not know what more to say, and I could only stammer out, tearfully :

"Ah, Monsieur Chauvel, how you hurt me !"

He was softened at this, and he said :

"No, no, Michel, I did not intend that, for I think you are a very honest, good boy, and to prove that I esteem you, I accept your present. What do you say, Marguerite, we both accept it, don't we ?"

"Oh, yes," said she, "since it will give him so much pleasure, we cannot refuse him."

Then Chauvel looked at the spade, and praised my work, saying that I was a good workman, and he hoped one day to see me a master-smith, and doing a good business. I was quite happy again, and when he shook my hand and went into the house, and Marguerite said "good night, Michel, good night," all was forgotten. I was glad I had answered so well, because Chauvel's glance had troubled me exceedingly, and if my reasons had not been so good, he might have had other suspicions. And I regarded this as a warning to be prudent, and to hide my ideas about Marguerite, until the day should come when I might ask her in marriage. I reflected thus on my way back to the inn. As I was going in to the public room, Maitre Jean arrived. He hung up his cloak in the press, and called out :

"Nicole, Nicole, bring me my blouse and my cotton cap. What a delightful thing it is to put on an old jacket, and one's wooden shoes. Is that you, Michel ! We have come back, you see ! The hammers will ring merrily now ! You must be behind-hand ?"

"Not much, Maitre Jean ; we have done the day's work in the day."

"That's right. That's right!"

Then came Dame Catherine, in great delight.

"It is really all over, Jean, quite over and done with? You will not go down there any more?"

"No, Catherine, God be praised! I had quite enough of all these honours, at the end. Now, our business is done, the statement is to be sent up the day after to-morrow. But it has not been done without trouble, and if we had not had Chauvel, God knows where we should all have been by this time. What a man he is! He knows everything, he can talk about everything. It is an honour to Baraques to have sent up this man. All the other bailiwicks have chosen him among their leaders to carry our complaints and grievances to Metz, and to maintain them against the attacks we may expect. Never, in all the history of Baraques has the place enjoyed such an honour. Now Chauvel is known everywhere, and it is also known that we have sent him, that he lives at Bois-de-Chênes, and that the people of this country have sufficient sense to recognise his ability, notwithstanding his religion."

Maitre Jean went on talking, while he was putting on his wooden shoes, and his old cap.

"Yes," he went on, "out of the hundreds of deputies at the bailiwick, the Third Estate chose fifteen to take up the statement, and Chauvel is the fourth! So now we must have a merry-making, you understand, a merry-making for our friends of Baraques, in honour of our deputy Chauvel. Everything is arranged, Létumier and Cochart are coming; I met them at the *Pomme d'Or*, in town, and I invited them in the first instance, and charged them to invite the others. This time you must take out the old bottles, from underneath the faggots, Catherine, and pile up your kitchen fire. Nicole must go this evening, and buy six pounds of good beef, three pounds of cutlets, and two fine legs of mutton from Konitz, in the market. Let her tell him the legs of mutton are for Maitre Jean Leroux, of the *Three Pigeons*. And they must be dressed with garlic. We shall want sausages with cabbage, and a good salad, and cheese, and nuts. Everyone shall be content. I want all the country-side to know that Baraques has had the honour of sending the fourth deputy

of the bailiwick to Metz, a man whom the others did not know, but whom we knew, and chose, and who has done more, by himself, to sustain the rights of the people than fifty others. But we will talk of all this again. Chauvel has shut the mouths of the oldest officials, the cunningest lawyers, and the proudest rich men of the provinces."

I thought Maitre Jean had had a glass or two, on his road. He talked away all by himself, stretching out his great hands, and puffing up his fat cheeks, as he always did at the end of a good dinner. We listened to him with astonishment and admiration. Nicole began to lay the cloth for supper; this re-established silence; each was reflecting on what he had just heard. When I was going away, Maitre Jean said to me:

"You will tell your father that he is invited by his old friend and comrade Jean Leroux; for we are old comrades, we drew for the militia together in fifty-seven! Mind you tell him. For to-morrow, at twelve o'clock exactly. You understand, Michel?"

He gave me his hand, and I replied:

"This is a great honour that you do us, Maitre Jean."

When one invites such good fellows, as you and your father," he said, "one does honour and pleasure to one's self. Now good-night!"

Maitre Jean, my godfather, had never before spoken so kindly of my father, and I loved him thenceforth, if possible, better than before.

CHAPTER XI.

THEN I went home. I told my parents that my father and I were invited to dine the next day at Maitre Jean's house with the notables of Baraques. They understood what honour was done us, and my father was quite touched by it. He talked to us a long time about the drawing for the militia, in the year '57, when Jean Leroux and he went about arm-in-arm through the town, with streaming ribbons in their three-cornered hats; and then about my baptism, when his old comrade became my godfather. He recalled these old memories in their least details, and said, over and over again:

"Oh, the good old times! the good old times!"

I know my mother was glad; but, as she was angry with me, instead of showing her

joy, she continued to spin and said nothing. Notwithstanding that, the next day our white shirts and our best coats were out on the table ; and she had everything washed and dried and in order in good time. And when, towards noon, my father and I went down the street together arm-in-arm, she looked after us from the door, and cried out to the neighbours:

“They are going to the great dinner of the notables, at Maitre Jean Leroux’s.”

My poor old father leaned on me and smiled : “We are as fine as we were on the day of the elections. Nothing bad has happened to us since, Michel. I hope this may last. Let us take care what we say, Michel ; one is apt to talk too much at a grand dinner. Let us take care of ourselves ; do you understand me ?”

“Yes, yes, father ; make your mind easy, I will not say anything.”

He was always trembling like a poor hare that had been hunted for years from bush to bush, and there were many who resembled him there—almost all the old peasants who had been reared in subjection to the nobles and the monks, and who knew that for them there was no justice.

A great undertaking ought to be commenced by young men, with the aid of some resolute old men like Chauvel, who neither change nor retreat. If the peasants had had to make the Revolution of '89 all by themselves, if the citizens had not begun it, we should be to this hour in '88. What would you have? By dint of suffering, one loses courage. Confidence comes only with success, and then education was entirely wanting.

My father and I heard the sound of laughter, and the talking and joking of the notables, when we were within a hundred yards of the tavern. Létumier, Cochart, Claude Huron the cartwright, and Maitre Jean, were standing at one end of the large table covered with a white cloth, and when we went in, we were quite dazzled by the decanters, the bottles, the old dinner service of painted delft, and the newly-plated knives and forks which shone brightly on both sides of the long table.

"Here comes my old comrade, Jean Pierre!" said Maitre Jean, hastily, coming forward to meet us, and laying his two hands on my father's shoulders.

"Ah, my poor old Jean Pierre, how glad

"I am to see you!" he cried; "how much comes back to my mind when I look at you!"

"Yes," said my father, with tears in his eyes, "the good old time of the militia, is it not, Jean? I think of it often; it will never come back again."

But Létumier, with his hat on one ear, and his large ginger-coloured coat hanging down along his meagre legs, and his loose red waistcoat with rattling steel buttons, cried out:

"It has come back, Jean Pierre; we all won at the militia the day before yesterday—the country won!"

He threw his hat up to the ceiling, and everyone laughed; but they were all the time slyly looking at the long line of bottles which had been brought up from the cellar, and thinking of the good dinner that was coming. I saw it in their eyes.

The kitchen door at the end of the eating-room was open, and we could see the blazing fire, the two legs of mutton turning on the spit, and the grease falling hissing into the dripping-pan.

Dame Catherine, with her sleeves turned

back, and large flapping white cap, was moving about, now with one dish, now with another held between her fingers and her apron ; and Nicole, with her huge iron fork, was turning the meat in the saucepans, or shaking a salad basket in a corner. A delicious smell diffused itself around. Who would have thought that Maitre Jean would have entertained simple village notables after this fashion ? But Maitre Jean, frugal and laborious as he was, did not regard expense on great occasions, and what greater occasion could he have than an entertainment to those who had named him and his friend Chauvel deputies to the bailiwick ? All the good citizens of my time have done the same ; it is the best way of preserving order. They had the good sense to put themselves at the head of the people ; and when their sons, through pride, or avarice, or stupidity, wished to separate themselves from the people, to become a sort of spurious nobility, they laboured for others more cunning than they. This is our history in one sentence.

The old men, gathered together at the window, had begun again to talk of the

affairs of the bailiwick, and whenever a notable came in, they would call to him :

“ Here, Pletche ! Here, Rigaud ! This way ! This way ! ”

Valentine, in the background, looked at me and laughed. But his enthusiasm for the king, the queen, and all the authorities, did not prevent his loving good wine, sausages, and ham. The notice of the coming dinner was very agreeable to him, and he turned his long neck in the direction of the kitchen with great complacency.

At last, as the clock struck twelve, Nicole came and told me to call Chauvel, and I was just going out, when he came in quietly with Marguerite. There was a general shout of :

“ Here he is ! Here he is ! ”

He came in smiling, and shook hands with everyone. He was no longer the same man. The lieutenant of police would not have come now to take him by the collar ; he had been chosen among the fifteen at Metz. The change in him was plainly to be seen, his little black eyes were brighter than ever, and his shirt collar bristled up to his ears.

Létumier, who liked ceremony, began to

make a sort of speech to him, but he put him off laughing, and said :

“ Maitre Létumier, here is the soup ! How good it smells ! ”

He was right. Dame Catherine came in, carrying the large soup-tureen, and placed it majestically upon the table.

“ Let us sit down,” said Maitre Jean ; “ and, Létumier, you can keep your speech for the dessert. A hungry stomach has no ears. Here, Cochart, Chauvel, sit there, at the top of the table. Valentine, Jean Pierre ! ”

Each took his place, and we thought of nothing but enjoying ourselves. I had never seen so fine a dinner, and I was lost in admiration, as was my father likewise.

“ Each man has his bottle beside him,” said Maitre Jean, after we had eaten the delicious marrow soup, “ let him help himself.” We all drew the corks and filled our glasses, and some of the company proposed the health of the deputies ; but Maitre Jean objected, on the score that we were then drinking only ordinary wine, and the toast merited a choice vintage. We agreed with him, and applied ourselves to eating large slices of the

boiled beef served, with parsley, after the soup. Presently, boiled sausages and *sauer kraut* made their appearance, and while Dame Catherine changed the dishes, Marguerite and Nicole went round with fresh bottles to replace the empty ones. At one o'clock the legs of mutton were served, and when the famous old wine of Ribeaupierre came on the table, our enjoyment was complete. We looked at one another, and exchanged smiles of content. Cochart said :

"We are men ! We have the rights of men ! If any one disputes that with me, let him step out into the wood, he will find me ready for him !"

And the old gunner Gauthier Courtois rejoined :

"If we are not men, it is because the others have always had good wine, and good food for themselves. Before a battle was to be fought, they were very glad to flatter us up, and to promise us everything we wished for. But afterwards, we heard of nothing but severe discipline, and the only plenty we had was plenty of blows with the flat edge of the sword. I maintain that it is a shameful thing that soldiers should be beaten like dogs, and

that those who are brave and faithful should be prevented from becoming officers because they are not noble."

Létumier was in high spirits, believing in everything, hoping for everything. "All our misery is over," he said, "our statements are all in order, they will see what it is we wish for, and our good king will be forced to say :— 'These people are in the right! They demand equality of taxation, and equality before the law, and that is just! Are we not all Frenchmen? Have we not all the same rights and the same burthens? That is good sense, or the devil is in it.'"

He spoke very well, opening his large mouth almost back to his ears, half shutting his eyes, cunningly, throwing his head back and stretching out his long arms. Everyone listened to him, and even my father nodded his head twice in assent, but he whispered to me :

"He speaks very well, and what he says is just, but let us say nothing, Michel, it is too dangerous!" And the poor old man kept looking at the door, as if he expected the constables to come in.

Maitre Jean filled our glasses with his choice old wine, and said :

"My friends, let us drink to the health of Chauvel; to him who has maintained our cause so stoutly at the bailiwick; long may he live to defend the rights of the Third Estate, and may he always speak up as well as he has hitherto spoken. To Chauvel's health!"

We all leaned over the table, and touched our glasses together, with enthusiasm, as each repeated:

"To the health of our deputies, Maitre Jean and Chauvel!" We shook the windows with our shouts, and the people passing by in the street flattened their noses against the panes, and thought, as they looked in:

"They are enjoying themselves, in there."

The notables having sat down again, the glasses were filled, and while Marguerite carried away the remains of the legs of mutton, the hams and the salad, Dame Catherine and Nicole brought in some large cream tarts.

Every eye was turned on Chauvel, waiting for him to speak. He sat quietly at the head of the table, his face was pale, his lips were compressed, and he looked pensively at his wine glass. The choice wine of Ribeaupierre had not enlivened him, for, instead of replying gaily to the toast, he said, in a clear voice:

"Yes, the first step has been taken! But let us not yet sing hymns of victory, we have a great deal to do before we win back our rights. The abolition of privileges, of the land tax, of the *gabelles*, of the taxes in kind, of the *corvées*—is already much to ask,—depend upon it the others will not be easily made to loosen their hold on what they have, no, no, they will fight, they will defend themselves against justice! they will have to be forced into yielding! Everyone who lives by his place, and hopes to ennoble himself, will call all the officials to his aid. And, my friends, even this is only the first point, and the least of all we have to contend with. I believe the Third Estate is to win the first battle, it is the will of the people, and the people who have to bear these iniquitous charges, will support their deputies."

"Yes, yes! to the death!" cried Létumier, Cochart, Maître Jean, and Huré, clenching their fists, "we shall win, we are resolved to win!"

Chauvel did not stir, and when they had finished, he went on as if no one had spoken:

"All the actual, pressing injustice under which the people are groaning, all that is too

plain, too flagrant, we may remedy, but what good will that do us, if later, when the States General are dissolved and the supplies for the debt voted, the nobles re-establish their rights and privileges ? It would not be the first time, for we have had States General before now, and there has long been an end of all their decisions in favour of the people. What we want, what we must have, after the abolition of privileges, is power to prevent their ever being re-established. This power is in the people, it is in our army. It is no use to exert our will for a day, a month, a year, we must exert it always, so as to prevent the rascals and cheats who have pillaged us from quietly and secretly building up again what the Third Estate, supported by the nation, will have pulled down. The army must be on our side, and in order to secure it, we must make it law that every soldier may climb from rank to rank, according to his courage and his talents, even to the rank of a Marshal, or Constable of France. Do you understand me ?

"Here's Chauvel's health!" shouted Gauthier Courtois. Chauvel made a sign for silence, and went on :

"Then the soldiers will no longer be so

stupid as to support the nobles against the people ; they will be, and they will remain on our side. And then—now attend to me, for this is the chief thing—in order that the army and the people may not be deceived any more, in order that they may not be led blindly to destroy their own advancement and to defend those who fill the places which ought to belong to them, everyone must have full liberty to write and to speak. If an injustice is done to you, to whom have you to appeal ? To a superior. The superior always finds out that you are in the wrong, naturally, because he is an official who obeys orders. What can be more simple ? But, if you could claim your rights before the people, and the people themselves nominated the superiors, then they would not dare to do you an injustice, and, indeed, injustice could not exist ; for you would have only to withdraw your votes to get rid of your officials. But the people must have some education before they can understand these things, and therefore the nobles hated and dreaded the idea of education for the people ; therefore, the priests preached to you from the pulpits that ‘happy

are the poor in spirit.' Therefore, so many laws were made against books and newspapers, and those who endeavoured to enlighten us were forced to escape to Holland, Switzerland, and England. Many are dead, dead of absolute want; but no, such men never die; they are always in spirit among the people, inspiring and supporting them, but the people must read their words—must understand them. It is to *their* health that I drink!"

Then Chauvel held out his glass, and each of us touched it, and we all cried out together:

"The health of all good and brave men!"

Many of us did not know who they were of whom Chauvel spoke, but, no matter, they shouted all the same, and so loudly, that Dame Catherine came in to warn us not to make so much noise, for half the village had assembled under our windows, and fancied we were rebelling against the king. Valentine went out immediately, and my father looked at me as if inquiring whether it was not time for us to make our escape.

"Very well, Catherine, all right," replied

Maitre Jean ; " we have said what we had to say to each other, and that is enough."

We all became silent at his words, and handed about the baskets of apples and nuts noiselessly. Presently we heard the droning of an old fiddle outside.

" Ha ! " said Létumier, " there's Methusalem."

And Maitre Jean called out :

" That's right ! Send him in here. He has just come in time."

Marguerite went out, and returned with old Methusalem, whom all the country side knew. His real name was Dominique Saint Fauvert, and all the old people will tell you he was the oldest man who ever was known to have the use of his limbs. He was close upon a hundred years old. His face was as yellow and as wrinkled as a piece of gingerbread, and one could hardly make out the shape of his nose and chin, and where his little sunken eyes were, under their heavy eyebrows, as white as a poodle. He wore an old grey felt hat, with a turned up brim, and a cock's feather. The sleeves of his old great coat and the seams of his breeches were slit, and tied all along with laces like a child's

swaddling clothes, and the airs which he played dated from the time of the Swedes, one could hardly listen to them without crying.

"Is that you, Methusalem?" cried Maitre Jean. "Come in, come in!"

He held out a large glass of wine, which old Dominique took with three profound bows, and drank very slowly, shutting his little eyes. Dame Catherine, Nicole, and Marguerite stood behind him, and we all gathered round.

Maitre Jean asked him, when he handed back the glass, to sing something, but the old man answered that he had not sung for years. And as we stood looking at him, he began to play an air, so old and so sweet, that no one there knew it, but after a while my father said :

"Ah, that is the tune of 'The Peasants' "——

And everyone cried out :

"Yes, yes, it is the tune of 'The Peasants,' Jean Pierre, you must sing it!"

I did not know that my father could sing well, I had never heard him. He said :

"I have forgotten it all ! I do not know the first word !"

But, when Chauvel urged him, and Maitre Jean protested that there never was a better singer than his old friend Jean Pierre, at last, with red cheeks and downcast eyes, he said, gently :

"Since you wish it so much, I will try to remember the song."

Then he began to sing, following the low strains of the fiddle, in a voice so sweet and so sad, that we seemed to see our poor old men in the old times scratching up the earth, while their wives dragged the plough, and then the ruffianly soldiers coming to rob them of their harvest ; their wretched straw-thatched huts in flames, the stored grain burning, the sparks glittering, the women and the young girls dragged away into the bye roads ; and then pestilence, famine, and the great hanging ! Every kind of wrong and wretchedness, and it went on, it went on, there was no end to it.

My heart had been cheered by plenty of good wine ; but, nevertheless, before my father had come to the third verse, I was

sobbing with my head on the table, while Létumier, Huré, Cochart, Maitre Jean, and two or three others were singing the chorus, as if they were singing at the funeral of their fathers and mothers.

Marguerite sang also. Her voice rose like the complaining of a woman harassed and driven like a beast of burden—like the voice of a woman dragged away to shame and torture—it was terrible, it made the hair stir on my head. I looked around, and saw that we were all as pale as death. Chauvel, at the end of the table, looked at us like a wolf. At last my father left off singing, but the fiddle droned on. Chauvel said :

“Jean Pierre, you have sung that well. You have sung like one of those of old, because you have felt what they felt ; what our fathers, and our grandfathers, and all those from whom we are descended for a thousand years, have felt and suffered.”

No one spoke, and he continued :

“But the old song is ended. It is time another should begin.”

In an instant every man present (and I the first) was on his legs, and we cried out :

"Yes, another song shall begin! We have suffered too much!"

"We shall see that soon," said Chauvel. "For the present, let us remember Dame Catherine's warning. She is right, we must not make any more noise, it does no good here."

Then Maitre Jean began the song of the blacksmith, and Valentine, who had just come in again, took it up. We all joined in, and this song restored our cheerfulness, because, though it is sad, it is strong. The chorus says that "the blacksmith forges iron," and we smiled at that, for it had more meanings than one. Many good songs were sung that day, but my father's song I shall never forget, and when I think of it I exclaim once more :

"Oh, great and holy revolution! Let those among the peasantry of France who are capable of blaming and denying thee learn the old song of their predecessors, and if it does not convert them, may they and their children sing it again in serfdom. Then they will understand it perhaps, and their ingratitude will find its fitting award."

Very late that day my father and I returned home. On the following day, the 10th of April, 1789, Chauvel set out for Metz. The States General were not far off.

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